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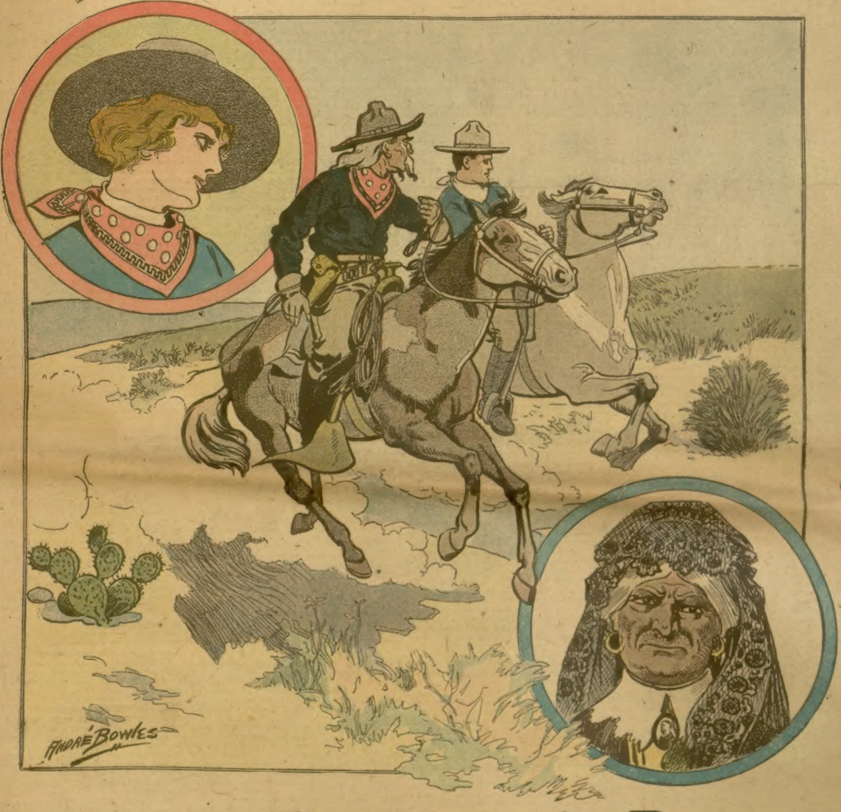

Beatrice Farnham's Rescue

Or, Beyond the Mexican Border - By Charles Haven Liebe

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CHAPTER I.

HE WAS only 22, and he sat his horse with as much ease and grace as tho he had spent his twenty-two years in the saddle. His face was ruddy, strong for all its boyishness, and his features were clear-cut and regular. He wore riding-boots, riding-clothes of khaki, a blue flannel shirt open at the throat and a broad-brimmed gray felt hat that had cost more than most men pay for half a dozen hats. His blue eyes were turned thoughtfully to the southward. Before him lay the purling Rio Grande, and beyond the Rio Grande—well, almost anything lay beyond the Rio Grande, in the much disturbed Republic of Mexico. His name was Laramie Ford, and he was the only son of the rich and prosperous owner of the great Circle-F Ranch. The cowmen called him the Circle-F Kid. They felt that they had a perfect right to call him that. Most of them had known him from boyhood; a few of them had seen him in his swaddling-clothes.

Mounted on a buckskin pony beside him was Long Tom Angel, an old plainsman of the type of American that went to California in the old days of the gold fever. Angel was absently and silently watching a white bird that had just alighted close by the river's edge and was intently picking at something on its leg. Finally he turned to his youthful companion.

"A penny for your thoughts, Kid!" he grinned.

Laramie Ford smiled a dissatisfied smile. "I was just thinking—what a lot of adventure there is beyond the river!"

"When your dad was your age," said Long Tom Angel, "that's jest the way he talked, edzactly! But he had more adventure than you'll get. He had everything that goes to make life pleasant—Injuns, rustlers, bandits, everything. Your dad sure keeps a close eye on you, Kid, believe me!"

"A close eye!" snorted the boy. "First thing you know, he's going to ask me to powder my nose and stick hairpins in my hair! Only yesterday morning he cautioned me to stay at least a thousand yards from the river! Me, a full-grown specimen of the genus homo, with this on my hip!" With one hand he touched a pearl-handled Colt's .45.

Long Tom looked absently at the bird down beside the water. It was still picking at something on its leg. Then he spoke:

"Son, it's because you're all the old man's got that he's sech a plague-taked fool about you. So you oughtn't to think hard of him."

"I know—but he needn't try to make a girl of me!" and Laramie Ford, too, looked toward the white bird. "Say, Tom, what is that down there by the river—is it a pigeon?" He drew his pearl-handled revolver.

"It looks like a pigeon," said Angel; "but don't shoot at it."

"Why?" quickly.

"Oh, because you couldn't hit it; and because somebody might hear the shot and be put to the bother o' comin' to see what it meant. Shots along the border gen'ally mean somethin' besides pigeons now, you know."

Ford holstered the weapon. For a moment he watched the bird interestedly, then it rose into the air and flew northward.

"By George!" suddenly exclaimed Long Tom. "It's a carrier pigeon, and it has picked a message loose from its leg and left it down there on the sand!"

Ford dismounted a little ahead of his companion, ran down to the paper and caught it up. He unrolled it; it was covered with a dainty feminine handwriting; he read it aloud:

> "Uncle Perry: Fight here yesterday. Revolutionists in possession of town. General Lorenzo Benevidas has had father arrested. Demands that I marry him as ransom for father. Is threatening us. Rioting in streets. Servants all deserted but old Faustina. Have closed house and barred doors. Send us help!
>
> "BEATRICE.
>
> "P. S.—If the worst happens—look behind stone marked A in cellar for Blue Star."

When he had finished reading it, Laramie Ford turned with brightening eyes to the old plainsman. Ford's red blood, the blood of a thousand adventurous forefathers, was pounding wildly in his brain. He knew then that no earthly power could prevent his going beyond the border, into the forbidden land. Long Tom, too, knew it. He had heard every word of the message. Ford spoke.

"Where was there a battle yesterday?" he asked breathlessly. "And who and where is 'Uncle Perry?' And what is the 'Blue Star?'"

"Pity she didn't name any places," said Angel, with a twist at his ridiculously long mustaches. "I heard there was a fight at Santa Catalina yesterday; I don't know who or where 'Uncle Perry' is; and I don't know a cussed thing about the 'Blue Star.'"

"How far is it to Santa Catalina?"

"Sixty miles, straight south," answered Long Tom. "What are we goin' to do about it, Kid?"

"What are we going to do about it!" exclaimed Ford. "Why, we're going down and rescue the girl and her father—that's what we are going to do about it! There's no time to waste on the authorities!"

"But your dad," frowned Angel; "what will he say?"

"My dad is in Fort Worth, and he won't be back until day after tomorrow," said Ford. "I know he's foolish about me, Tom, because I'm all he's got; but if he knew the circumstances—do you want to know what I think he'd say if he knew the circumstances?"

"What?"

"I think he'd say, 'Go to it, son!' My dad is a man all over, once you get under his skin. Now, you're going to suggest that we take the whole force of cowboys, aren't you? Well, we're not. We'd be as long in rounding up the boys as we'd be in getting the authorities started! We've got to get to Santa Catalina tonight, Tom. Besides, you and I can do more toward rescuing that girl and her father than a carload of cowmen could do. We can work on the quiet, and a carload of cowmen couldn't. Don't you see, Tom?"

"I reckon you're right, Kid," agreed Angel. "Yes, I see. And I'm sure with you—sink or swim, live or die, I'm with you jest like I was with your daddy before you!"

Long Tom, too, had adventure-loving blood in plenty. They mounted and rode swiftly toward the ranch-house.

"I keep wonderin', Kid," muttered Angel, when they had covered half the distance, "what is it that she called 'Blue Star?'"

"We'll soon know, perhaps," replied Laramie Ford.

CHAPTER II.

AN HOUR before daylight on the following morning, Laramie Ford and Long Tom Angel rode their dust-stained and weary horses into a thicket of chaparral not far from the ragged outskirts of little old Santa Catalina. They hid their supply of food in the brush, tethered their mounts securely, and stole into the town, running one of Benevidas' guard lines without attracting attention. To be recognized as Americans was a thing they wished very much to avoid; if the revolutionist general knew of their presence in Santa Catalina, he would, without a doubt, guess their mission and have them arrested and imprisoned.

They had laid no plans far ahead. Plans laid in advance in Mexico are very apt to be upset; no one knows what will happen there. Rather, they meant to adapt themselves to conditions as they found them, and to hold themselves in readiness for any emergency that might arise.

They were moving quietly down a dark and narrow street, when Long Tom caught his companion's arm and pointed to a lighted window in a low house of adobe.

"I'm tanned pretty well, and I speak Spanish like a Greaser," he whispered. "What's the matter with me playin' off that I am a Greaser? What's the matter with me sneakin' up to that window there and askin' where I'll find my dear old Aunt Faustina, that stays with an American family? Wherever we find the old duenna, of course, there we'll find this girl Beatrice. Hey?"

"Try it," said the younger man.

Ford stepped into the shadow of a wall, and Angel went softly toward the lighted window. When Long Tom had reached a point within a rod of the house, he heard voices, and he caught the word "Faustina!" But, he told himself, there were a million Faustinas in Mexico. He took two more steps forward, stopped and listened.

He heard a creaking feminine voice speaking in a queer mixture of Spanish and Indian, and he recognized only two words of it; but those two words were almost enough to take his breath away.

"Estrella Azul," these were the two words. They mean "Blue Star."

Thrilled thru and thru with curiosity, Angel went on. He must have made a noise, for the talking ceased when he touched the adobe wall. With a long arm he swept aside the flimsy window-curtains, and at the same time he leaned over the ledge.

An old and wrinkled woman, with a black lace mantilla over her white head, sat on a chair to his right. To his left, busily frying tortillas, was a young woman with the dark, heavy countenance of a Yaqui.

"Buenas!" he greeted them pleasantly, in a low tone. "I am looking for my good old Aunt Faustina, who stays with an American family, I think; can you tell me where——"

At the mention of the name Faustina, the old woman had gone to her feet with the quickness of a cat. She sprang to the light, which sat on a shelf beside the window, and blew it out. Tom Angel shot forth an arm to seize her wrist, and caught only the black lace mantilla. There was a quick shuffling of feet, then the click of a rifle or a revolver, then silence.

"I fights no woman!" said Long Tom, under his breath; and he turned and ran back to Laramie Ford.

"It's time to fade!" he whispered.

They hastened across the street and into the shadow of another wall, and there Angel told Ford of that which he had seen and heard.

"It was the servant Faustina herself!" decided Ford. "Perhaps she has deserted her mistress—man, there's no telling what has happened to the girl!"

Long Tom twisted thoughtfully at his ridiculous mustaches. He pointed to the east, which was fast growing roseate with the coming of the dawn, and muttered:

"Whatever we do, Kid, we've got to do in a hurry. We got here too late."

He went to another adobe house, awoke a Mexican woman, and for the second time inquired after his good old Aunt Faustina, who, he explained, was staying with an American family. The Mexican woman accommodatingly directed him to the home of Jackson Farnham, which stood on a low hill not far away. The two would-be rescuers hurried toward it.

Jackson Farnham's house was very large, of stone and plaster and tile, and of distinctly Spanish architecture. There were broad verandas with graceful arches between the columns, two spacious roof gardens, a spacious patio at the rear. In the grounds around it grew trees and shrubs, and all manner of blooming plants of a semi-tropical order.

The two Americans crept across one of the verandas and to a huge door of medieval design, which was fitted with an old-fashioned brass knocker. Ford rose to his knees and knocked softly. There was no response; the house was as silent as a sepulcher. He went to his feet, stepped to a closed window, and tapped on the glass. Still there was no answer to his summons. Once more he tapped on the glass, and this time louder. A moment later he heard the sound of footsteps coming down a stairway on the inside, and then a musical feminine voice inquired, in Spanish:

"Who is it?"

Ford told her in a few guarded sentences. The girl opened the door for them, and they entered, after which the door was closed and barred.

"Come upstairs," said the girl. "It's safer to talk up there."

They followed her thru a dark room, thru a dark hallway, and up a broad, dark staircase. The three of them entered the sleeping apartment of the girl's father. After taking care to see that the window-shades were properly drawn, Miss Farnham lighted a lamp and motioned toward chairs. The two men sat down wearily.

"My mother was a Spanish woman, and my father has Spanish ideas of the proprieties," said Miss Farnham, "and I have, therefore, a duenna. You will pardon me if I call her in."

She left the room. Angel looked toward Ford and said, "I knowed old Faustina was a duenna. But ain't the girl purty, Kid?"

Beatrice was not only pretty; she was beautiful. She was as fair as any Englishwoman; her hair was a dark, lustrous brown; her eyes were as clear as diamonds and as brown as any topaz. She was tall, but not too tall; in feature and in figure she proved the truth of the old saying that proportion is one of the greatest of the secrets of feminine loveliness.

The girl came back looking much worried. "Faustina is gone," she said. "I can't understand it. It isn't like her to disappear without saying a word."

Tom Angel looked at young Ford and narrowed his eyes. Neither man spoke.

"You came to help me," continued Miss Farnham, looking from one of their sunburned faces to the other, "and I assure you that I am grateful to you. Let me tell you all about it.

"General Benevidas, as he calls himself—he is merely a bandit—has been trying for a year to persuade me to marry him. I have never even considered it. It was thru him that my father lost everything he had except a worked-out silver mine and this house and what it contains. It was his threats that sent my mother to her death—they were terrible threats, and she was in the crisis of a serious illness when he made them! Three days ago Benevidas had my father arrested on wholly false charges; he claimed that father had been furnishing money to the Carranzistas. Then he came to me and told me that I would have to marry him if my father was ever freed. He had his men shooting in the nearby streets to frighten me. I refused—that is, I asked for time. When he had gone I shut and barred the doors.

"My uncle, Perry Oliver, of Fort Worth, brought me a white dove as a present two months ago. I had to keep it in a cage, because it was a little wild. I thought of using it as a carrier of a message to Uncle Perry—and you know the rest.

"If you came here to rescue me, gentlemen," Beatrice went on, "I can only say that I will not leave Santa Catalina unless my father goes with me."

"We came, of course, to try to rescue both you and your father," Ford hastened to say.

Beatrice Farnham smiled sadly. "You might spirit me away, perhaps—it would be difficult—but I am almost sure that you could not get father out of that prison. It is a strong prison, all stone and iron bars, and it is closely guarded within and without. Another thing that is against you is this: All of Santa Catalina is with Benevidas. Do you know why? Because they are afraid not to be with Benevidas!"

Daylight had come broadly while they were talking. Miss Farnham blew out the lamp. Ford went over to the windows and let up the shades. Then there came the sound of knocking at one of the heavy front doors downstairs, and Miss Farnham turned pale.

"Who is it?" asked Ford. "Benevidas?"

"It must be," frightenedly answered the girl. "He told me yesterday that he would be here early this morning to ask me for the last time to be his wife."

"Just let me and my friend Tom Angel handle him," and Laramie Ford smiled reassuringly. "I wonder if he is alone?"

"The chances are that he is," Jackson Farnham's daughter said nervously. She continued: "But be careful what you do, Mr. Ford. Benevidas is particularly vengeful. Don't be the cause of his murdering my father."

"Slip along with me, Tom," whispered Ford.

The two men went downstairs with no more noise than a cat makes when it walks. Ford left Long Tom standing in the hallway, and stole to one of the front windows; he peered between the closely drawn curtains, and saw that the revolutionist was unaccompanied. Benevidas had a strikingly malignant face; his countenance was the countenance of a Mephisto, with small, mean eyes; his jet-black mustaches were curled upward, and his lips were thin and cruel; his swarthy jaw protruded, and his forehead receded. He wore a much adorned uniform of an old Spanish design.

Ford tiptoed back to Angel, and the two stole to the door just as Benevidas knocked insistently again. The Americans drew their weapons, and Angel opened the door. Instead of finding himself looking into the topaz eyes of Miss Beatrice Farnham, Lorenzo Benevidas found himself looking into the frowning eyes of a pair of revolver barrels!

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Mexican, in good English.

"Jest walk right in, Mr. Benevidas, as the spider says to the fly," grinned Long Tom Angel. "We've got a little business with you, old hoss!"

"Pronto!" added Laramie Ford.

The revolutionist's face had turned ashen. He walked in obediently. After disarming him of his saber and magazine pistol, Long Tom closed the door and barred it.

"Sit down there," ordered Ford, pointing with his revolver barrel to a richly carved mahogany table. "We're going to ask you to kindly oblige us by an exhibition of your penmanship."

Lorenzo Benevidas sat down, scowling darkly as he did so. At that moment Beatrice Farnham entered the room looking white and scared.

"Some day you will pay, all of you!" growled Benevidas.

Ford ignored the threat, and turned to the young woman. "Pen and ink and paper, please, Miss Farnham. Mr. Benevidas wishes to write a message."

The material was placed upon the table before the Mexican almost immediately.

"Now," smiled Laramie Ford, "you will please write an order to the gink who is in command of the guard, saying that he is to release Mr. Jackson Farnham at once. And you will add that Miss Farnham has promised to marry you. Write!"

Benevidas fumed, swore in three languages, threatened, and fought for time. But in the end he wrote the order. Also he wrote an order, on a separate sheet of paper, saying that the two Americans, Laramie Ford and Tom Angel, were to go and come in Santa Catalina at their pleasure, unmolested. This latter Ford folded and placed in the inside pocket of his khaki coat.

Then Ford faced the girl. "Would you be safe on the streets now?"

"With Benevidas here, yes," answered Miss Farnham.

"Then take this order for your father's release to the prison."

Jackson Farnham's daughter took the sheet of paper Ford held out to her, put a mantilla about her shoulders, and hastened away. Twenty minutes later she returned with a tall, rawboned, smooth-faced man with iron-gray hair and the brow of a thinker. Farnham was profuse in his thanks to his fellow-countrymen.

After cautioning Angel to keep a sharp eye upon the Mexican, Ford led the Farnhams to another room. The three sat down close together.

"There is a little matter to decide," began Ford. "If the four of us start for the border now, all of Santa Catalina will see us, and we may not be safe, perhaps, even with these orders Benevidas has written for us. If we wait for the coming of night to start, the soldiers will be certain to suspect that something has befallen their chief, and make investigations. I leave it to your judgment, Mr. Farnham."

"It strikes me," said the old American, "that the best thing to do is to bind and gag Benevidas in the cellar, or kill him, and make a dash for the border very soon. My daughter and I have horses——"

"No," gently interrupted Beatrice. "They have all been stolen."

"Angel and I each have a horse hidden in a thicket to the north of the town," said Ford. "We can easily walk, and you two may ride."

"Many thanks!" cried Farnham. "Then we will act according to that arrangement, and we will leave Santa Catalina at once. I regret to leave my property behind, but life is the more precious. Anyway," and he turned to his daughter with a smile, "we still have the Blue Star, haven't we?"

"Yes, we still have that," she answered readily.

Ford sat up straight in his chair. Here was that mysterious Blue Star mentioned again! Since the moment of their arrival at the house, both he and Angel had been on needles to know what it was; but their courtesy would not permit them to ask questions about it.

Farnham read correctly the mystified look in Ford's eyes. He rose. "Come," he invited, "and you shall see the Blue Star."

Laramie Ford went with them to a room in the rear of the great house. Farnham removed a table from a large rug, removed the rug itself, and opened a trapdoor that revealed a stairway leading down to a great cellar, which was walled on all sides with stone and which had no outside entrance. His daughter lighted a candle; he took it from her hands and began to descend the steps.

Ford and the girl followed closely upon his heels. He went to a stone in the wall, and began to pry it out of place. A moment later, he stepped back with a cry of mingled chagrin and amazement.

"The Blue Star is gone!"

"Faustina!" exclaimed the girl, smotheredly. And that was the answer.

Ford quickly told the Farnhams of that which had taken place at the adobe house before the break of day. Jackson Farnham shook his head, and his shoulders drooped; he had grown years older in one minute.

"And now," he said bitterly, "I am as poor as I was when I began. I began with nothing, and I have nothing now."

Beatrice touched Ford on the arm. "The Blue Star," she said, her voice low and sad, "is an immensely large, blue-white diamond. It is worth a fortune. My father bought it from Porfirio Diaz. It represented nine-tenths of father's earnings for forty years. In Mexico, you know, banks are not reliable."

They went slowly up the stone steps, closed the trapdoor, and replaced the rug and the table. Then they went to the room in which they had left Long Tom Angel and his captive.

Both Long Tom and Benevidas had disappeared!

CHAPTER III.

THIS is what became of Long Tom Angel and Lorenzo Benevidas: The footsteps of Ford and the Farnhams had barely died away toward the rear of the great old house, when Angel heard a slight noise behind him. He half turned his head to see the old Mexican woman, Faustina, standing less than ten feet from him, and she held a big-bored, single-shot rifle trained squarely at his head! An open doorway behind her showed her method of gaining entrance; it had been the creaking of that door that had caused Angel to look around.

It flashed into the old plainsman's mind that Faustina was the mother of Benevidas, and in this he was correct.

"Put down the revolver!" snapped Faustina, in English.

"Not much!" growled Long Tom, also in English. "When you pull the trigger and get me, I pull the trigger and get Mr. Benevidas there. You put down your gun, if you don't want Mr. Benevidas killed!"

Tom Angel was trying to delay the issue until Ford returned. Faustina, shrewd, cunning as a lynx, must have guessed his intentions. She stepped forward and almost touched the back of his head with the muzzle of the rifle she held in her clawlike hands.

"When I fire," she said in a low, creaking voice to her son, "you dart quickly to one side——"

Long Tom Angel had always believed that any gun in the hands of any woman was a little more than dangerous. He believed that Faustina meant to shoot, and there is really little doubt that she did. Angel let his big revolver fall heavily to the table that stood between him and Benevidas; he hoped that it would make enough noise to alarm Ford, but, unfortunately, it did not.

"Now, my son!" said Faustina. "Quick, before the friend of this man returns!"

The Mexican was not slow to take advantage of the situation. He got to his feet, took his magazine pistol and saber from the table and holstered the one and sheathed the other; then he caught up Angel's big Colt's .45 and leveled it toward its owner.

"Come with me," he said; "you are under arrest!"

Angel's best chance lay in obeying the man who now held the upper hand, and he knew it. He went with Lorenzo Benevidas and his mother toward the stone prison.

A little later, Tom Angel was thrust into a musty cell that had for furniture only an empty box. He sat down on the box, put his elbows on his knees, and began to twist thoughtfully at both sides of his ridiculously long mustaches. The outlook was bad, indeed. A detachment of the guard, he knew, had already gone to the house of the Farnhams to arrest the three Americans who were there; Benevidas was going to try to break Beatrice's spirit by imprisoning both her and her father.

Benevidas hadn't gone with the detachment of the guard. Perhaps he remained behind to keep his skin whole. After a few minutes of trying vainly to think of a way out, Angel arose from the box, went to the high, barred window, and looked out. Under a scrubby tree, just beyond the cell wall, stood Faustina and her son, talking rapidly.

"I am sure they are after the stone itself," Faustina was saying.

"And you have it?" said her son.

Faustina put a hand into her bosom and drew out a package wrapped in heavy paper. There was a wrapping of silk inside the paper, and in the silk was the gem. Angel saw it plainly; it blazed in the sunlight like some strange and unearthly bluish fire.

"It should be in a box," growled the revolutionist.

"Perro!" exclaimed Faustina, showing her yellow teeth in a snarl. "I left the box to deceive them!"

"Fool!" sneered Benevidas. "As if they couldn't easily open the box and see for themselves that the diamond is gone! But," in a milder tone, "it is really the Porfirio Diaz stone. It is interesting to think how many have died over the stone. I congratulate you, madre mio! And I will keep it for us. When this insurrection dies out, I can start another with the money which some rich American will pay me for this Estrella Azul."

Faustina replaced the wrappings, and gave the little parcel into the hands of her son, who immediately put it into his pocket. Then Lorenzo Benevidas went toward the street to look for the return of the men whom he had sent to the Farnham residence.

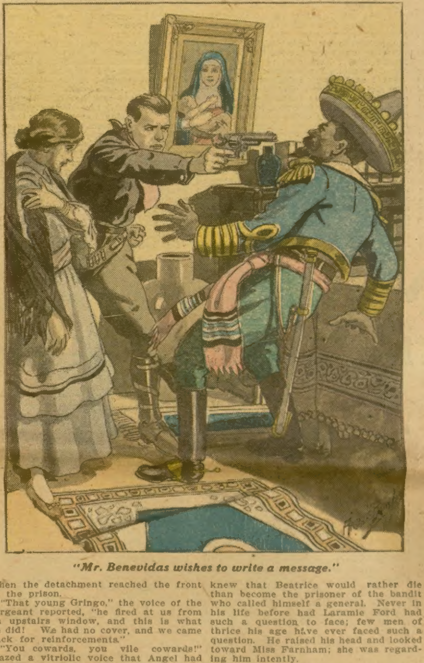
Again Tom tried to think of a way out for himself. There seemed to be none. He believed that old Ellis Ford would gather a force of cowmen and come to Santa Catalina to look after the welfare of his son; young Ford had left word at the ranchhouse that he was going to Santa Catalina for the purpose of helping an American girl who needed it. If Ellis Ford and his men arrived in time, all would be well; if they didn't——

A few minutes later the sound of firing came from the direction in which lay the Farnham home. Angel guessed, and not wrongly, that Ford and the girl's father were trying to hold the house against the Mexicans. That meant a siege, and how long it could last would depend on the supplies of food, water and ammunition that were at hand. Long Tom Angel, always a fighting man, wished hard that he could be with old Ellis Ford's son at that minute. It galled him to have to sit, unarmed and helpless, while a fight was going on.

Soon the firing ceased, and shortly the detachment returned, rout step, seeming more like an infuriated mob than like a body of soldiers; they half dragged, half carried one dead man and two badly wounded men. From the barred window of his cell Angel saw them coming.

"Good old Kid!" he said to himself, mightily pleased. "He's been givin' an account o' himself! Ain't that jest like Ellis Ford's son to do that! If he ain't a real chip o' the old block itself!"

He heard most of that which was said when the detachment reached the front of the prison.


"Mr. Benevidas wishes to write a message."

"That young Gringo," the voice of the sergeant reported, "he fired at us from an upstairs window, and this is what he did! We had no cover, and we came back for reinforcements."

"You cowards, you vile cowards!" blazed a vitriolic voice that Angel had no difficulty in recognizing as that of Benevidas. "Send a man with a white flag, and give him orders to tell the young Gringo that his friend will be shot unless he surrenders both himself and the other two!"

Tom Angel stood there at the window and waited for the appearance of the man with a white flag. When he appeared Tom Angel shouted to him, in a voice of the bitterest defiance:

"Tell them not to surrender! Tell them old Tom has always lived with his boots on him, and that he can very easy die in the same boots!"

It was defiance alone that prompted him to shout that. He well knew that the man with the white flag would not deliver his message. Then there was the clanking of a saber, and quick footsteps, in the corridor, and he turned from the window to see the evil, triumphant face of the bandit, misnamed general, Lorenzo Benevidas.

"Since you don't mind it," said the Mexican, "I am going to kill you whether those up at the Farnhams' surrender or not!"

"All right," Angel smiled complacently. "It's worth dyin' to know what old Ellis Ford and about a thousand of his Texas friends will do to you when they catch you."

"When they catch me!" laughed Benevidas.

"They'll get you," Angel assured his captor. "They'll get you, even if you hide behind the moon."

CHAPTER IV.

LARAMIE FORD was watching from an upstairs window when the man with the white flag in his hand walked up to a point within thirty yards of the house and halted there. The Mexican delivered his message, and Ford replied in Spanish:

"Wait."

He turned to Jackson Farnham and his daughter, who were sitting on the other side of the room and out of the range of possible bullets. He told them in a few words about the ultimatum of the bandit Benevidas.

"If we do not surrender," asked Ford, "will he keep his word and kill Tom Angel?"

"There is small doubt of it," answered Farnham.

Ford dropped his revolver into its holster, folded his arms, bent his head, and began to think. It was hard to refuse to save his true and lifelong friend from death. It was hard, too, to give Beatrice Farnham over to the foul hands of the villainous Benevidas; and he knew that Beatrice would rather die than become the prisoner of the bandit who called himself a general. Never in his life before had Laramie Ford had such a question to face; few men of thrice his age have ever faced such a question. He raised his head and looked toward Miss Farnham; she was regarding him intently.

"If I were in Tom's place," he began, "I'd say, 'Save the girl.' If my father was in Tom's place, he'd say, 'Save the girl.' And if Tom knows about this ultimatum Benevidas has sent us, he is saying now, 'Save the girl.' Any good American would say it, for any good American is a hero—barring one, and that one is myself. Miss Farnham, we shall not surrender. We can count on a relief party as soon as my father can get it up and get here with it. We have enough food, water and ammunition in the house to enable us to withstand a siege of several days."

The wonderful topaz eyes of Beatrice thanked him, and at the same time expressed a great pity for the condemned man in the prison. Ford walked back to the window, and called down in his fluent Spanish:

"Go back to General Benevidas, as he calls himself, and tell him that we choose to await the arrival of the thousand Texans that are on their way here, rather than to surrender. And tell him, also, that it will cost him his life if he harms a single hair in Tom Angel's head."

The Mexican nodded, made an awkward military 'bout-face on his heel, and hurried back to his master. Laramie Ford's eyes became dim as he thought of poor old Tom. But there was no time for anything but action now, for the siege would begin very soon, he knew.

The doors and windows downstairs, shutters and all, were closed and fastened, and food, water and ammunition were brought upstairs. Farnham's home was supplied with a small arsenal, which was already upstairs. Then Farnham and Ford packed the stairway full of furniture for the purpose of blocking the way against the Mexicans; when they were thru, one man could easily hold the upper floor against a small army.

Within the hour the siege began, and it began in earnest. Every window in the great old house was soon broken by flying bullets; every door was soon filled with bullet holes. At opposite corners of the upstairs floor, Ford and Jackson Farnham stood with repeating rifles in their hands and fired at any part of a Mexican's human anatomy that offered itself as a target. Not a man of the attacking force reached a point closer than fifty yards from the house.

Angered and amazed at the work of the two Americans, Benevidas drew his men off and repaired to his headquarters to think out a plan by which he would lose fewer men and less ammunition. Farnham and Laramie Ford met in the upper hallway, and shook hands heartily over their temporary victory. Neither of them had received a scratch, which was due to their extraordinary precaution and their perfectly covered points of vantage.

"My, but wasn't it lively while it lasted!" exclaimed old Farnham. "They never could tell what window we were going to shoot from, could they?"

Miss Farnham then took Ford's hand and congratulated him. "You're a good fighter," she murmured, "a good fighter!"

Like a cavalier of old, Ford raised her hand to his lips with unmistakable reverence and appreciation. And, also like an old cavalier, he said with marked courtesy:

"Thank you, dear lady."

From that glorious minute he loved her, and from that glorious minute she loved him. But the happiness of it was dampened by the thought, in each of their minds—Tom Angel was lying down there in the prison, waiting to be put up against a wall and shot like a traitor!

Farnham's voice brought young Ford back to himself: "I wonder what scheme Benevidas will put into effect when night comes?"

"His men will gain the lower floor easily," said Ford. "We will have to depend on holding the upper floor. But we can do it, I think. A lamp should be lighted and placed in this hallway at a point where it cannot be seen and shot out by the Mexicans; by this light we can see the heads of the attacking force as they appear above the level of the floor. One of us," he added, as an afterthought, "will have to watch these upper windows to see that no Mexicans gain entrance by means of a ladder."

"I see," replied Farnham. "You'd make a good military strategist."

Ford yawned in spite of himself. "I rode all of last night, you know," he muttered drowsily. "I wonder if I could snatch an hour's sleep while we are waiting for Mr. Benevidas and his scheme?"

"Of course," said Farnham.

He led the weary Laramie Ford to a bedroom. The Texan threw himself across a bed with his clothing on, and went to sleep almost immediately. And he dreamed of seeing a tall, sunburned man with ridiculously long mustaches shot against a stone wall.

But Long Tom Angel, while his young friend was dreaming of him, was deciding that he would not be shot unless the shooting was done before nightfall. Tom had evolved a plan of escape that gave promise, and he was only waiting for the coming of night to put it into effect. To break out of his cell in broad daylight would not mean escape; it would mean being riddled with slugs of lead before he had gone twenty yards.

Being very tired and very much in need of sleep, Tom slept two hours that afternoon. When he awoke the sun was going down. He was struck by the deep quiet which reigned; Santa Catalina was as perfectly still as tho no living soul was there anywhere. Tom strained his ears in wonderment; then he told himself in a whisper that that strange quietude presaged devilment.

The shadows began to lengthen and grow deeper, and finally they merged into one another, and it was dusk. Across the street a dark-eyed senorita suddenly began to play a guitar and sing in minor notes a song about some old cloak-and-sword caballero of the knighthood days. Angel walked softly across his cell and peered into the darkening corridor. He made out the figures of two guards sitting together on a low bench beside the main entrance. While he was looking toward them, one of the guards scratched a sulphur match and lighted an old-fashioned square glass lantern and hung it on a peg in the wall just over his head.

Angel's hopes rose higher—there were only two guards! But that was not so strange, for he was the only person in the prison.

A foot above the door of iron bars, lying against the wall that stood between Angel's cell and the corridor, there was a wooden beam a foot in width. Angel took up the box from the stone floor, climbed noiselessly up to the beam and lay down upon it, flattening himself against the wall. Then he threw the wooden box to the floor, and it fell with a crash. At the sound the two guards rose quickly, with little cries of alarm, and rushed down the corridor. They stopped at the door of the old plainsman's cell.

"Jose, he is gone!" said one.

"Quick—bring the light, Pedro!" exclaimed Jose.

Pedro hurriedly brought the lantern, held it over his head, and peered between the bars. For a moment there was a silence so deep that Tom Angel feared his breathing would spoil his plan. Then Jose spoke.

"Open the door, Pedro—he is gone!"

Pedro produced a ring of great brass keys and opened the cell door. The two entered and looked carefully everywhere but in the right direction.

"I cannot understand it," growled Jose. "Do you know what it means to us?"

"That we shall be shot in the Americano's place, perhaps," said Pedro. "If he is really gone, we will say nothing of it. Let the other relief make the discovery. But it may be that this is not his cell. Let us examine the others!"

He looked upward; but the light blinded him, and the lantern's square top obligingly kept Angel in the shadow.

The two guards went out and left the door unlocked, which was the main point that the American was working for. When they had gone a few yards down the corridor, Angel swung himself lightly to the floor. Still the guards and their lantern moved on. Angel raced soundlessly to the main entrance and was free once more!

He stopped to make sure that the way was clear before he crossed the narrow street. A lighted window to his left caught his eye; and just beyond the ledge, in plain view of him, sat Lorenzo Benevidas, who was talking rapidly in a low tone and at the same time making grimaces, as tho he were in pain. Angel stole up behind a clump of bushes near the window, watched and listened.

There was only one other person in the room that Benevidas had taken as his headquarters, and that other person was the old hag Faustina, mother of the revolutionist. She was kneeling on the floor, busily cleansing a bullet wound in the calf of her son's right leg. Her son was very earnestly cursing every Gringo, man, woman and child, between the Great Lakes and the Rio Grande.

"That young devil, I swear that I will kill him for this!" declared Benevidas; and Tom Angel knew that he meant Ford, who had shot him.

"If you do," creaked Faustina, "you will have to act very soon. There must be some truth in that talk of a relief force from beyond the river. Hijo mio, both their horses bear the brand of the great Circle-F Rancho!"

Tom Angel frowned. So their horses had been discovered!

Faustina went on, while her clawlike fingers washed the blue-lipped wound:

"Those in the Farnham house can withstand a siege. They have shown you that. What are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do about it?" flared the man to whom revenge was the greatest of virtues. "Do you think I am going to sit here and twiddle my thumbs until the relief force comes? Madre mio, I have sent to Tres Montes for dynamite. I will soon show you what I am going to do about it! Only the girl shall have a chance—and that only if she agrees to marry me. The two men—bah! I tell you, madre mio, I wish I had every Gringo under the sun in that house!"

Dynamite! Angel clinched his hands. Truly, Lorenzo Benevidas was a murderous demon. And now Long Tom understood that strange quiet that hovered over Santa Catalina; a part of the bandit's force had gone to Tres Montes for explosives, and the other part was guarding the home of the Farnhams to see that none of the three Americans made an escape. If Angel had had a revolver, he would have shot Benevidas then and there. But Angel had been disarmed even of his pocketknife.

Benevidas took from somewhere in his clothing the package that contained the great Porfirio Diaz diamond, and unwrapped it. He held the magnificent stone up to the light of the lamp, turned it over and over, and watched it glitter; and it shone, indeed, like a bluish star. He did not fear for its safety, and why should he? Was not all of Santa Catalina, and the country for miles around Santa Catalina, in his power absolutely?

"Cascaras!" he exclaimed. "What a jewel!"

Faustina rose from her knees with a basin in her hand. "I shall need more water, my son. Shall I take the light?"

Benevidas replaced the wrappings of the diamond, and put the package in his pocket. "Yes, take the light, madre mio," he said.

Faustina limped from the room and left it dark behind her. Tom Angel crept up to the window-ledge, straightened, shot his two long and sinewy arms in, and caught Lorenzo Benevidas by the throat; he dragged Benevidas from his chair, across the window-ledge, and to the ground. The Mexican fought hard, but his assailant was by far the stronger man; soon Angel had choked the revolutionist almost to insensibility. Then Faustina, alarmed, appeared at the window with the lamp in one hand and a magazine pistol in the other.

"My son"—she called—"Lorenzo!"

Tom Angel saw her and her weapon, and recognized his danger. He took from Benevidas the package that contained the diamond, rose, and ran swiftly into the shadows. Faustina emptied her pistol in his direction, but not one bullet touched him.

Angel chose a somewhat circuitous route for good reasons, and hastened to join his young friend. He believed that the sound of firing at headquarters would draw a portion of the guard from around Jackson Farnham's home, and he wished to make his entrance while the watchfulness of the Mexicans was not so great.

He reasoned aright. Fully half the guard went hurriedly to headquarters to make investigations. Angel crept unseen thru the dark grounds and to the vine-covered wall of one of the roof gardens; he climbed nimbly and noiselessly to the top of the wall, cried out, "Don't shoot me, Kid!" and dropped to the tiled floor.

"Tom!" exclaimed a dark figure that had appeared at a window. "I came pretty near letting you have it! Hurry in!"

A bullet struck the wall behind Angel; the Mexicans had discovered him a little too late. Angel went with his friend to a dark room and to the Farnhams, and the diamond was returned to its owner. Only the upper hallway was lighted, and they dared not show themselves in that light, even. Angel quickly told them of the dastardly plans of Benevidas. When he had heard it all, Ford began to pace the floor in the darkness.

"What are we to do?" asked Farnham. "To try to escape now means that we will be shot down. To remain in the house means that we will be blown to pieces. There is little or no chance of a relief force reaching Santa Catalina in time to save us. Beatrice, my daughter, will you stay here and find your death with us, or will you go with Benevidas and live?"

From the darkness at Ford's left came the voice of Beatrice: "Father, I didn't think you could ask me that. I will stay here, of course."

Without knowing that it was Ford, she touched Ford's arm. The young Texan caught her hand in his and pressed it warmly.

"Dear lady!" he murmured.

This remarkable story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00 and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

THE MICHAUX Z-RAY

Or, The Criminal Investigator

By Harry Stephen Keeler

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CHAPTER XX.

JARRICK surveyed the bare, extended arm for several long seconds. Finally he raised his eyes to the man's face, and from there he turned them on Lilywhite's roly-poly countenance.

"Let me give you two colored people a quiet tip now," he said easily. "If you're telling a lie—either together or separately—take my advice and don't try to leave the neighborhood or the city during the next two hours. For if I find that I want you, you'll be arrested before you get one hundred miles away. Do you get that, now? On the other hand, if you're telling the truth, go right on with your work as tho nothing has happened. In other words, don't attempt to drop out of sight—because it will only succeed in landing you both in the county jail. And keep your mouths shut about this affair. That'll do. You can go."

He flung open the door and stood aside. Without a word Zisco and Lilywhite left the room, glancing fearfully toward each other. Jarrick closed the door once more and looked toward Mrs. Tissenden.

"And now, my dear lady, what can you tell me about this embryonic pharmacist upstairs that's out of work, as Mr. McClintock says?"

The landlady was decidedly flustered. "Why—about Henry Jensen—I can't tell you a great deal, Mr. Jarrick. He's a sour-faced fellow that never has a word to say to any of my other boarders. And where he came from I don't know. But he must have had some money saved up, for he's paid his board regularly, even tho he's been out of work for the last three or four weeks."

"Has he really looked for work in his own line?" asked Jarrick, suspiciously. "Do you know?"

"Yes," she said decisively. "Mr. Jensen certainly has looked for all kinds of work, for Lilywhite and I have found want ads up in his room that he's clipped from the paper. I've seen them in his wastebasket, too."

"And his hours? Is he home at this place every evening before ten o'clock, or is he one of these—er—night birds?"

"As to that I can't say," replied Mrs. Tissenden. She thought for a moment. "Yet I can say, too, as far as the last four days go. He turned in his Yale key last Wednesday night and asked me for another. It was so worn, you see, that it didn't operate the tumblers right. Since then he's had to ring the doorbell each evening he comes in, for I've not had time to go down to my locksmith and see about getting a brand-new lock and twenty keys as I intended to do. And neither Lilywhite nor I have been troubled with answering the door for him at late hours."

"Ah," said Jarrick. "Without a key—and you've got it in your own possession? Good!" He paced back and forth along the floor, thinking. He stopped in his tracks and looked up again. "Is there any possible way for me to have a look at this Henry Jensen without his suspecting who I am?"

Mrs. Tissenden pondered on the matter. Then she arose.

"Follow me," she instructed. "I believe I'm justified in letting slip a deliberate lie this time, on account of the deplorable happening that seems to have taken place in my house. So I'll merely tell him that I'm showing a prospective purchaser, brought here by Mr. McClintock, thru the boarding-house. I'm sure he knows that I've advertised it for sale."

She led the way to the second floor, Billy and Jarrick following in her wake. At the head of the carpeted stairs she knocked three times on a door. It opened very cautiously a foot or so, and a man thrust his head surlily out.

"Pardon me, Mr. Jensen," she said haughtily, "but I'd like to have access to your room for a minute. This gentleman is looking over the house with a view to buying."

Without a word, the man addressed as Jensen flung open the door, walked over to the window, and dropped into a rocking chair. The sunlight that streamed in showed a narrow forehead, covered by a shock of flaming red hair, and a pair of slim, unnaturally white hands.

Jarrick stepped in and looked over the entire room, paying particular attention to the walls and furniture, as tho he were an actual prospective buyer. From his position at the outer edge of the doorway, Billy saw the older man's eyes drop finally to the bureau and linger there. Four or five unstamped envelopes containing blind addresses in care of the Chicago Sunday Tribune lay in a pile, and close by the heap was a narrow length of blank, gummed paper that usually accompanies the strip of stamps on the edge of a complete stamp sheet. With another hasty glance around, however, Jarrick merely bowed himself out with a muttered:

"Much obliged for your trouble."

The only answer the man at the window gave was an indistinguishable grunt. So Mrs. Tissenden closed the door quickly. At the end of the hallway, Jarrick turned to her.

"I'm certainly much obliged to you," he said in a low voice. "If I want any more information I'll call on you later. And Mr. McClintock, I'm sure, will be glad to give you a few more details of the affair at a more convenient time. For the next quarter of an hour or so we'll be in his room, where you might send Doctor MacPherson if he should happen to come in."

Billy led the way upstairs, and Jarrick trudged after him, grunting audibly at every step. When they reached the younger man's tiny front room, Jarrick stumbled in and sank hurriedly down on the bed, panting and puffing.

"Great mackerel, what a climb!" he groaned, fanning the air toward him with his old-fashioned hat. He rested a moment and then asked: "Will you please place the furniture exactly as it was when you left the room—and then set your hat on the bureau exactly where the black leather case stood."

Billy closed the door, drew the rocking chair to the same position that it had occupied the night before, and laid his hat with precision on the bureau. But when he looked toward Jarrick, he saw the latter surveying the window with troubled eyes. Finally he pointed directly at it.

"Why didn't you tell me before that your window had a fire-escape? And how high up was that window last night?"

Billy glanced in the direction he indicated.

"In the excitement of affairs," he rejoined curtly, "there are probably a good many things I haven't remembered to tell about. But as to the window, Mr. Jarrick, I can tell you this much: I had it closed to within an inch of the bottom on account of the dust and sand that were blowing in the room."

"Sand?" asked Jarrick, arching his eyebrows slightly.

"Yes, sand. It's been coming in from that flat building they're erecting across the street."

"Oh, yes. I noticed the bricks and the framework when we came up Scott street." Jarrick stared out of the window for a few seconds. "What's the idea of that great pane of plate glass resting on the joists of the top floor? Not going to put in a store—for aeroplane visitors, are they?"

"No. An art studio," said Billy briefly, wondering if Jarrick's attention were wandering from the business in hand or if he were forging along some new line of thought.

"H'm! Of course. Art studio—sheet of plate-glass—plenty of light. Quite logical, to be sure. But now," he added, after a short pause, "raise that window as carefully and silently as you can."

"Put your fingers in your ears, then," cautioned Billy.

He drew very easily and slowly on the cast-iron handles attached to the window frame. But a most unearthly squeaking and wailing sounded forth.

"Does it always scream like that?" asked Jarrick, gritting his teeth.

"Always since I've been here. This house has system a-plenty—but confoundedly little oil."

"Did your aunt have normal hearing? Could that wailing have taken place while her back was turned, without her hearing it?" Jarrick laughed a little. "In other words, McClintock, your aunt wasn't stone deaf, was she?"

"I should say not. She could hear as well as either of us."

"Good enough, then," Jarrick returned. "That fire-escape complicated matters for me beautifully during a minute or so. But with that horrible squeak—well—we can eliminate the possibility of any one stepping into the room from the window without an occupant of the room knowing it." He took his gaze from the window and allowed it to wander over the bureau, from the bureau to the chair, and from the chair to the door, evidently measuring the distance with his eyes. Finally he pointed at the door. "What's that wire contrivance?" he asked suddenly.

Billy looked at the object Jarrick was indicating. Directly below the hinged slot in his door was the wire basket which so far had never caught anything in the way of mail except certain regular epistles from Carolle Harbison. For some reason it seemed now to have taken on a special sentimental halo.

"That," he explained, "is a wire basket that I purchased at the five-and-ten-cent store. It's supposed to catch the mail that drops thru the slot. It's quite harmless, Mr. Jarrick."

"Very likely," replied Jarrick, absentmindedly, pondering deeply on some matter. "You're sure the chair was that distance from the door, McClintock? Two and a half feet?" Billy was just about to answer, when the older man took the words out of his mouth. "Of course. That's certainly a foolish question on my part. If the chair had been any nearer, the rocker would have prevented your opening the door when you returned. That's simple geometry, after all. And yet," he commented with irritation, "the rocking chair faces the black leather case—and it's fully ten feet away." He stopped again, but finally commanded: "Swing open that door carefully—with the least noise possible."

"You'll hear the same thing you did before," laughed Billy. "I told you this house doesn't boast an oil can."

He walked to the door and turned the handle as easily as he could. But he couldn't have made a silent job of it if he had tried, for both the lock rattled horribly and the hinges squeaked dolefully as the door swung open, barely clearing the rockers of the chair.

Jarrick's face was a study in bewilderment. He began to chew on his lips now. For a long two minutes he sat on the edge of Billy's bed, fanning himself with his hat but saying nothing. But suddenly he arose without a word and walked over to the corner of the room, where a broad wooden ring supported a Turkish bath towel. He took down the towel and examined it carefully from hem to hem. And presently a cry—more a guttural grunt of satisfaction—escaped him.

"If the towels are distributed in this house at five o'clock," he asked, "then this is yesterday's towel. Am I correct?"

"That's correct. That's the towel that Lilywhite placed in the ring yesterday afternoon. It's never been used yet."

"Have you an indelible pencil in your possession? Think well. It's mighty important. Have you?"

Billy needed no thinking, however. "Haven't had an indelible pencil in my possession for a month. Use a fountain pen for everything." And he added as an afterthought: "And black ink."

Jarrick spread open the towel and held it up by one end. "And therefore," he stated triumphantly, "it would appear that this well-defined smudge came from the right hand of your aunt. How about it?"

Billy turned his attention to the towel. Near the bottom of it was an irregular purple stain.

"By George," he cried, "you're right, Mr. Jarrick. Aunt Hunter didn't remain seated in her chair, after all, during the time I was gone. But yet——" He stopped. "But the stain from an indelible pencil won't come off without water, will it? It——"

"The principal point," broke in Jarrick, very elated, "is that if she left this rocking chair to reach the towel rack, then her back was turned at least once toward both the black leather case on the bureau—and the one-inch opening in the window." But his face fell suddenly. "Yet the window squeaks. Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "Which direction did it come from?" He lapsed into a moody silence. But after a lengthy pause his face lighted up. "Gad! It's quite possible. It's more than possible. It's simplicity itself. McClintock, I confess at last that my cranium is composed of billiard-ball material. I've been sitting here next to a cloth-backed rocker and making theories to fit——"

He said no more, lifting himself up from the bed instead, with a ponderous effort, and crossing hastily over to the rocking chair. He first tilted it far back on its rockers and examined the single strip of thin blue velvet that was sewed across the two vertical braces of the back, thus constituting a comfortable back rest. Then he tilted it forward until it lay completely inverted on the floor.

"And there," he remarked grimly, "is the first real clew we've found."

Billy looked curiously down at the back of the velvet strip and caught sight of an odd mark, insignificant in itself, but yet of such shape and color as to preclude the possibility of its appearance there as an accidental deposit of light-colored dust. It consisted of a complete and geometrically perfect circle of chalky white powder, perhaps three-quarters of an inch in diameter. And as he turned to Jarrick again, he saw the latter fumbling excitedly in the pocket of his dingy, spotted coat.

Jarrick finally managed to bring forth his thick, very convex disc of glass, clamped in its crude metal holder. Without a word he jerked the chair to an upright position again and dragged it over to the window. Drawing down the shade so that the room was darkened except for the light coming in over the sill, he kneeled down in back of the velvet strip and focused the magnifying glass upon it. Only for a second, however, did he hold it in that position. Then he struggled clumsily to his feet and handed the instrument to Billy.

"Here, McClintock, have a look. As far as one-third of our case is concerned, this should be the beginning of the end!"

CHAPTER XXI.

BILLY lost no time in stooping down and peering thru the thick disc of glass. On account of the strip of velvet being between him and the light he was barely able to make out the circle of chalky white material. But he could discern directly in the center of it, however, a tiny aperture which allowed the light from the window to pass clear thru the strip of velvet, as light passes thru the pinhole of a pillbox camera.

"Yes," said Jarrick, looking down at him, "I've seen enough for a few minutes, at any rate. Presently we'll move on toward your aunt's house, where we'll have a look at this Victor Michaux's room. I secured her key while we were at Gordon Smith's establishment."

He stepped to the window and raised the shade to its full extent, while Billy rose to his feet no wiser than when he had just riveted his attention on the white circle. For an instant the older man stared at the unfinished building across the street, at the great piles of new bricks, the stacked lumber, the wide, flat tubs of mortar and sand, and the dozen or so of feverishly working bricklayers. Then he turned away and stepped back to the bed, where he flung himself full length on his back and placed his hands across his eyes.

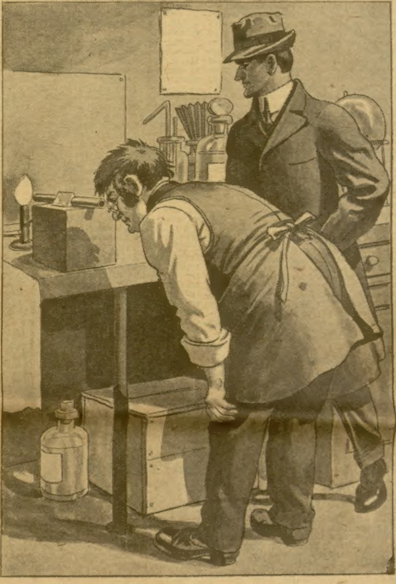
"One big favor, now, McClintock—and an important one. Give me absolute quietness for four or five minutes, so that—but you understand, I hope. Take a seat in that rocker, and don't talk to me until I tell you I'm ready to talk. Will you do that?"

"Go ahead, Mr. Jarrick," Billy assured him, dropping into the rocker as perplexed as ever. "I'll guarantee not to interfere with your thoughts."

Minute after minute Jarrick lay in that same position, thinking, pondering, puzzling, seemingly digging back in the dim recesses of his memory for some fact, some name, some description, something that was eluding him, since every little while he gave an exclamation of disgust and passed one of his hands desperately across his forehead. But finally, after the alarm clock on the bureau had ticked away six minutes and Billy was beginning to fidget in his chair, Jarrick sat up and brought down his hand on his knee with a whack.

"McCracken!" he exclaimed, to no one in particular. "That's the name. And Luke in front of it. Luke McCracken. And there's only one Brownsville, Missouri; that's certain. So Luke McCracken must have been close behind. And the man in the brown beard, I'll wager ten to one, must have been the—— But the chief, tho, ought to be able to look that up in a jiffy." He stood up and seized his hat. "Come," he said to Billy. "We'll go on to Mrs. Hunter's now, and we'll also stop in on the way and do a little telephoning to Callahan."

Billy led the way downstairs. He asked no questions of Jarrick now, for he had come to the conclusion that it was the wiser course to allow the man to proceed unhampered in his own strange way toward whatever solution he was hoping to obtain. So, with scarcely any conversation, they covered the distance from the Devonshire to the corner of State and Division, where they proceeded south on State street. Jarrick's calmness seemed to have disappeared. He was visibly excited, his placid eyes gleamed with a strange light, and his pace was jerky and nervous. At Elm street Billy turned to him and asked if he wished to cross over to Clark and examine the spot where the fire had taken place the night before. But Jarrick only shook his head and grunted something about going back to that locality later on.



"Too bad!" he exclaimed.

So they continued along State street until they reached the first drug store. Here Jarrick led the way in, and Billy followed. And when Jarrick opened the door of the spacious telephone booth and motioned Billy to step inside with him, the latter did so with all possible haste, so curious was he to hear what was to be told Callahan about Mrs. Hunter's yet unexplained death.

While the older man was dropping in his coin and getting his connection, he turned and explained:

"I asked you inside the booth because I'm inclined to believe you're entitled to hear and see the developments of our case as fast as they occur. And I ought to apologize, McClintock, for certain unjust suspicions I held in your direction a while back. You see, I——" He turned suddenly to the transmitter. "Hello? Chief? Chief Callahan? This is Jarrick talking. Yes, Copelin Jarrick."

A pause followed, in which Billy could make out only a squeaking noise in the receiver.

"No, not that at all," said Jarrick, suddenly. "Mrs. Hunter was killed deliberately, chief. And that's absolute, definite, final, and unequivocal."

Another pause and more squeaking followed.

"No, it'll be all up to you, chief, to clear this particular end of the matter up. And if you'll follow these instructions, I believe that you'll get some very material results. And here they are: First, tip off every traffic cop, every patrolman, every plain-clothes man, every depot man, that Luke McCracken—Scarchin Luke of the Brownsville case—must be in this town, if my nose for the truth is scenting right. We may be too late at that, but have all the lodging-houses, hospitals, and outlying police stations combed. With the usual net and the fact that I know he was in Chicago Saturday night, we might pick him up within from one to twenty-four hours. You've got that now, chief, have you?"

Another pause.

"Secondly, have the body of the man who was killed at the fire ruins of 1132 North Clark street early this morning, brought from the Passavant Hospital morgue to the morgue in the basement of your own headquarters. Get out the book of special photographs under classification No. 6 and compare the one corresponding to Brownsville, Missouri, with the face of Victor Michaux."

Again a long pause.

"And thirdly get in touch by telegraph with any other people in Brownsville that have been intimately connected with the original of the photograph. You grasp my meaning, chief? In that way only can we corroborate the identification of both this Victor Michaux and of Luke McCracken—if you get him in the net. And 'phone me at my apartment in the St. Benedict as soon as you secure any results."

Another delay.

"Exactly, chief. Good-by."

Without a word Jarrick hung up the receiver and led the way to the street. But out on the sidewalk he turned to Billy, a grim smile lighting up his features for a bare second.

"Rather mystified you, eh, McClintock, what I just handed Chief Callahan over the wire? Well, I'm thinking there'll be more surprises before the day's over."

"I realize that it's none of my business, Mr. Jarrick," replied Billy, hesitatingly, "but how—well, I don't see just how your examination of my room brought out all these points about a Luke McCracken and a town called Brownsville, Missouri. Is it interfering too much to ask?"

A while back he would have been a little dubious about the effect his query would have on the irascible Jarrick, but he could see now that the latter had fallen into a most genial mood, and he no longer feared disturbing the older man's equanimity.

"All in time, my boy," Jarrick beamed. "All in time. All in time. I'd be in a fine fix to tell you my reasoning at this point—and then see my results come out wrong entirely. But if they come right, I promise you that you shall stay in the chief's office when I give him the whole story."

So Billy asked no more questions during the twenty minutes it took them to cover the distance to Mrs. Hunter's cottage at 213 Locust street. Once in the neighborhood he pointed out her dwelling, and Jarrick inserted the key which he had taken from her purse at Gordon Smith's establishment. It turned readily in the lock, and the two men marched into the strangely silent hallway.

Straight to the first bedroom Jarrick went, and pushed open the door which was standing slightly ajar. But there was nothing to be seen but an undisturbed bed, an old-fashioned, marble-topped bureau, a straight chair, and a clothes closet. He stepped to the bureau and pulled open each of the drawers in turn, but all he found was a broken comb such as a man might use. So he walked over to the closet and opened its door. A dirty shirt hung on a hook—but that was all.

CHAPTER XXII.

"OUR friend Michaux evidently came here again last night," remarked Jarrick, after a pause. "You can see for yourself that he's cleaned out everything. So he must have returned to get his things after he took up his new room at the Clark street rooming-house. Perhaps——"

For several seconds he stood with his hand on the closet door, thinking. Then he stepped into its dark interior and dropped to his knees on the floor. A second later the beam of a tiny pocket flashlight shone forth from one of his hands. Shortly after this he began to chuckle. Billy waited, and suddenly heard him say:

"Get me a piece of newspaper from one of those bureau drawers, McClintock."

Billy tore out a generous piece and brought it over. With the tiny light still in one hand, Jarrick wrapped something carefully in the newspaper. Then he turned off the switch and the empty closet became dark again.

"I think now," he remarked jubilantly, as he emerged into the light once more with a very small packet in his fingers, "that we'll meander over in the direction of my apartment in the St. Benedict. Things are clearing up rapidly for us. But I'm wondering if I won't find myself up a stump when I go to look into those fire premises? At any rate, there's no use of worrying about that till I get to it. Come, McClintock, we'll go now."

When they reached the front door he suddenly turned to Billy.

"Suppose we just take a look at the body of this poodle dog, Rags, that met its death on account of a too intimate acquaintanceship with the—er—Z-ray?"

So they made their way to the back porch, raised the cover of the coal box, and examined the dog's body superficially. But their inspection showed little, for the small, woolly body was now stiff and cold, its hind legs were drawn tightly up to its belly, and its eyes were wide open as if from some variety of canine terror.

After replacing the dog's body in the coal box they left the house, locking the door behind them. From 213 Locust street to the St. Benedict Apartments, one of which Copelin Jarrick claimed as a place of residence, was a walk of only a quarter of an hour. On mornings when he had walked downtown to work by way of Cass street, Billy had often noticed the St. Benedict building, a great nest of flats occupying about a square block, built entirely of dingy red bricks after an old-style architecture of thirty years ago, and containing a vast number of entrances on Cass street and Chicago avenue as like to one another as peas in the same pod. And he smiled openly when he thought how those great, rambling old St. Benedict Apartments were enough in themselves to suggest such a quaint character as Copelin Jarrick.

The latter picked out one of the multitudinous entrances and opened the door of a gloomy apartment on the first floor, where he ushered Billy down a dark, narrow hallway and flung open the portieres of a well-lighted room. At first the younger man gasped at the sudden contrast presented by the room furnishings, if furnishings they could be called. Along the wall which contained the two windows was a wide marble slab, supported on a rigid iron framework and covered with retorts, ring stands, bunsen burners, beakers, and test tubes in confusion. And along the wall, directly above the marble slab, were innumerable glass shelves holding hundreds of chemical bottles of every possible color—but all of the same shape and size.

Close to one of the two adjoining walls was a comfortable-looking leather couch, which appeared, however, from the condition of its springs and its torn and abraded spots, to have been in use for years and years. The head of it was raised, and covered as well by a bright red cushion; and hanging about a foot and a half above the cushion was a high-power tungsten electric bulb, surrounded by a white enameled reflector.

The third side of the room held a rickety mahogany desk provided with a telephone, a swivel chair, a huge blackboard supported on wooden uprights, and a ponderous, badly scratched, iron safe.

But the fourth wall! From top to bottom, from edge to edge, it was covered with shelves containing nothing but books. Books of all sizes, shapes, colors, ages, descriptions. Small and large books, leather-bound books, cloth-bound books, even paper-bound books. Books that were plainly falling to pieces from their antiquity; books that radiated the very atmosphere of brand-newness.

Before even removing his hat Jarrick dragged over the swivel chair, climbed up on it, and took down a small red volume from one of the top shelves. He rapidly thumbed over its pages until he found what he was searching for. Then, apparently oblivious to his companion, he stood where he was, reading part of its contents. So while he read on, Billy took occasion to study the titles of those volumes which were on a level with his own eyes. And as his gaze traveled along that one shelf, the more surprised he grew at the strange conglomeration of titles, the extreme diversity of subjects, he came across.

But his absorption in the titles of Copelin Jarrick's library was interrupted by Jarrick himself, who had returned the small red volume to its place on the top shelf and was clambering down to terra firma once more.

"All these pamphlets," he declared, noticing the younger man's rapt study of their titles, "constitute some light reading for my spare moments and for the long winter evenings when the snowstorms are blowing in from the lake."

While he spoke he flung his hat carelessly in one corner of the room. Then he tossed his coat on top of it, and donned a rubber apron which he took up from a compartment below the marble shelf. This done, he took from his hip pocket the bottle he had brought from Gordon Smith's, and unwrapped it before Billy's eyes, displaying about an inch of a dark red, almost black, fluid.

"Now, that little bottle," he explained, staring at it, "may not be needed—of course I say only 'may,' for I'm not yet certain—to complete our case and convict our man. As you already know, it contains a sample of blood taken from Mrs. Hunter's body. From an examination of it, it may be possible to determine—or at least to eliminate—certain poisons that might have been propelled thru the hollow needle whose end broke off against her seventh vertebra from the extreme force of the blow. And what kind of an examination do you suppose I'm going to make, McClintock?"

"Chemical, I presume," with a sidewise glance toward the many bottles of reagents on the glass shelves.

"Wrong this time," returned Jarrick. "Whatever foreign substance is in our sample of blood is there in such an infinitesimal proportion that a chemical test wouldn't even give us what is technically known as a 'trace.' No. We're going to tackle the spectroscopic method."

He stooped down and withdrew from a cabinet under the shelf a peculiar-looking instrument holding two hollow brass tubes, much like small telescopes, but each one pointing at a triangular prism of glass in the center. He placed it on the marble slab, adjusting it carefully by watching two small spirit levels attached to it and slightly turning three milled-head screws in the base. As soon as he was satisfied in this particular, he lighted a bunsen burner and placed it in direct line with one of the hollow tubes. This done, he took down a small instrument composed of a slender piece of platinum wire encased in a solid glass handle. He uncorked the bottle of dark fluid, dipped in the platinum wire, held it in the flame of the gas burner, and placed his eye quickly to the eyepiece of the remaining brass tube.

"Too bad!" he exclaimed, after swinging one of the tubes slightly from left to right. "A well-defined spectrum—but too complex. Let's see. One, three, six, seven, eight, ten bars, at least. Well, we'll get out the catalog of spectra and compare this with the HCN spectrum."

He opened a shallow drawer and took out another small book, which, when it was opened, showed that it contained hundreds of diagrams composed of plain black strips interspersed with brightly colored, vertical bars in different combinations. He turned rapidly to one which Billy could see was labeled, "Hydrocyanic Acid," and studied it. But his inspection puzzled him.

"The devil!" he grunted. "I thought certain that that would be it. Well, well, well, McClintock, what do you know about that?" He dipped the platinum wire in the bottle again and held it in the bunsen flame. "Take a look," he commanded.

Billy pressed his eye to the eyepiece and saw something similar to one of the many diagrams in Jarrick's spectrum catalog—a black horizontal strip with a great many vertical bright bands. But as he looked up and his eye fell on the colored diagram labeled "Hydrocyanic Acid," he perceived at once that the two were vastly different in the location of the bands, the grouping, and the colors of the bands themselves.

Jarrick took up his position at the eyepiece again. Time after time he dipped the platinum wire in the bottle and held it in the bunsen flame. Time after time he rattled over the pages of the book, making a comparison of some particular spectrum with the one which he was obtaining. But finally he turned off the flame, placed the bottle on one of the glass shelves, and set back the spectroscope in its compartment.

"We're a little too late to get satisfactory, and definite results by that method," he said. "The decomposition of the blood has produced a very complex spectrum which includes practically all the spectra that I wanted to compare it with. But one thing is certain, and I believe you saw that for yourself. Two of the four bright bands resulting from vibration of the cyanogen ion are missing here. And hydrocyanic acid, as well as all the cyanides, therefore, are eliminated absolutely from our consideration.

"But now to work on another side of our triangle of death," he continued gravely. He took down a small glass vessel, corked with a rubber disc containing two holes. "This is the main part of the apparatus for the so-called Marsh test."

Without proffering any more explanations, he inserted in one of the holes a bent, hollow glass tube, drawn to a fine point; in the other a glass funnel whose stem reached almost to the bottom. After removing the rubber cork he dropped into the vessel a handful of small bright metal scraps from a jar labeled, "Pure Zinc." Then he took down from a shelf a bottle labeled, "Dilute Sulphuric Acid."

He now unrolled the newspaper packet which he had carried away from Mrs. Hunter's house, displaying, however, only a small, dark, pasty lump. This lump he dropped into a test tube and poured a small quantity of the dilute sulphuric acid on top of it. The yellow liquid bubbled a little, and then turned to a dark and dirty hue.

Jarrick removed the rubber stopper from the apparatus for the Marsh test, and poured several gills of the pure diluted sulphuric acid in with the metal scraps. Immediately the zinc began to emit a very storm of bubbles, and the gas and air under the increased pressure could be heard slipping thru the hair-like nozzle of the bent glass tube with a fine hiss.

"Yes," Jarrick went on, watching the bubbling, "this Marsh test is one of the most conclusive tests known in chemistry, despite its extreme simplicity. And I'll say right here that if I get a negative result I may be forced to concede the existence of a fatal Z-ray. But if I get a positive result, young man, I'll know beyond all doubt that the Michaux Z-ray was something that existed only in the mind of the man who called himself Victor Michaux." He waited a moment. "And now for the test itself."

This interesting story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it.

The Jewels of Jezebel

Or, The Last Days of a King

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE Queen of France was still inconsolable over the loss of the jewels of Jezebel. Tho she knew that they had passed into the hands of the King—for had she not seen them in his possession?—her rage because of her loss did not abate.

The one other thing that troubled her was the fact that Odette still lived, even after she (Isabel) had poisoned her wine with the Golden Draught. Her return to the palace after her interview with the King's favorite was made in haste lest she should be stopped by some band of roisterers who, altho clad in velvet, did not hesitate to assault and rob all who came in their way.

She resolved anew that Odette should be swept from her path by some means, and she cast about to see how this despicable deed could be accomplished. Paris teemed with factions. There were swords awaiting the gold of the highest bidder, but those who supported the King loved him so well that the Queen could not look for help in that direction.

When she found herself safe within the walls of the palace she called into her presence one of her maids of honor, a girl from Brunswick, and looked her sternly in the eye.

"Where is your lover, Rene?" the Queen asked.

The girl flushed to the temples and stammered out a reply that she did not know.

"Is he not called Rupert the Wolf?" Isabel asked, leaning from her chair.

"Some men are wrongly named, your majesty. Rupert is as gentle as a lamb."

"I'll accept your declaration, girl," answered Isabel, with a cunning smile. "Fetch him to me."

"When shall he come?"

"At once."

"He will be asleep now," pleaded the girl.

"Asleep or awake, it matters not. I want him right away."

The girl Rene protested no longer.

It was the break of the new day when the Queen beheld before her the man whom she wanted. He was not a handsome man, but his figure indicated the strength of a lion and his eye the cunning of the fox. Rene was dismissed at once, but she lingered in the corridor in the attitude of eavesdropper.

"You are Rupert, Rene's lover?" began the Queen, when she had looked the young man over from head to foot. "Are you ready to serve your Queen?"

"She has but to ask me to die for her."

"That is enough."

A minute of silence followed.

"I am beset by enemies," suddenly continued Isabel. "The wolves of Paris are already leaping at my throat. I must have friends."

"And how can I befriend my Queen?" eagerly asked the young man.

"By an act that will earn my lasting gratitude. There is a woman in my way."

"Your majesty has but to speak to claim the sword of Rupert de Lux."

"Well spoken, young man!" exclaimed Isabel. "I want the glass of so-called love shattered by a strong hand. Until that is done I will pass sleepless nights that will devour my very soul."

"Say on, your majesty. I am waiting for your commands."

"I love the King. All my life is wrapped up in his well-being. Subtle enemies have brought to him one who has stolen his love away, and I am desolate. This Burgundian witch is in my road. She is with Charles at all times; she plots with him in divers ways, and unless soon stopped she will overturn the kingdom in behalf of France's foes."

"That should not be," ventured Rupert de Lux.

"It is going on now, this plotting against the welfare of the state."

"Where is this Delilah?" exclaimed Rupert, his hand stealing toward his sword hilt. "Show me this creature, your majesty, and she shall no more trouble the Queen of France."

The shadow of a smile overspread the Queen's face. It passed in a second.

"They call her Odette of Burgundy," she answered in low tones.

"I have heard of the witch," was the reply. "Rene has spoken of her, and never to her credit."

"She is the serpent in my path," Isabel went on. "All Paris knows where she dwells."

"I myself have seen her abode," said De Lux. "Why, it is fit to house a princess of the royal blood."

"It has housed such in its time," Isabel replied. "But who contaminates it now but the sorceress who has stolen the King's love?"

"She should be driven from Paris!" exclaimed De Lux.

"To return and annoy me another time?" cried the Queen. "Drive a serpent from the garden and it will find its way back. There must be no mere banishment in this instance. There must be silence forever."

"Your majesty is of rightful speech. The banished snake returns to bite."

Queen Isabel left her chair and held out her jeweled hands.

"Will Rupert de Lux become his Queen's champion?" she exclaimed, red blood sweeping thru her cheeks. "Will he strike for his Queen's wrongs?"

"She has but to ask him," was the retort, and quick as the lightning's flash there was a sword in the air. "I swear to avenge my Queen!" shot from De Lux's throat. "I will brush this obstacle from her path as I would kill the serpent that struck at Rene."

"'Tis all I ask," exclaimed Queen Isabel. "I leave it all to you, Rupert de Lux. From this hour you are your Queen's champion. She rests her cause with you."

A few minutes afterward Rupert de Lux went down the marble corridor of the palace and thence down the great staircase. There was pride in his heart and a glowing light in his eyes. The Queen's champion! Why had she chosen him? Could he not see Rene's hand in all this? Had she not suggested him to the Queen? He was destined to become one of the greatest men in France! Rene would yet have a duke for a husband.

He jingled his rapier in its scabbard as he paced the street. There was victory in his eyes. On the morrow he would tear himself from his old associates, for they would be beneath him, for none of them had a mission like his—a mission that was the stepping-stone to fortune.

His little bark was hugging the shores no longer, but had put to sea, and soon would be in the sunshine of the boundless ocean, and he would be second to no man in the kingdom.

He went first to his own lodgings and arrayed himself in a sort of disguise. This was accomplished in a few moments. Then he was no longer Rupert de Lux, but simply an assassin in the pay of Isabel of France.

The day was now lighting up the city. The night had passed, and Charles VI. might be thinking of the duel with his brother of Orleans and of the body which a menial had carried from his sight.

De Lux knew nothing of this. He thought of nothing but his new fortunes. He certainly had fallen into the golden highway.

The wineshops had already opened up and were being patronized. At the gaudiest doorway De Lux paused and looked inside. Half a dozen men were taking their morning vintage, and the sight was suggestive. In he went and took a seat at one of the tables. His mouth watered for a glass of Tokay.

The wine was brought, and De Lux held it between him and the light. At that moment shouts and furious curses began outside. Something fell heavily against the door, almost forcing it from its hinges. De Lux held the glass to his lips and waited. What was the fray outside?

There were more oaths, sharp sword-play as every one in the wineshop could hear and then——

The door fell inward and a man sprawled on the floor, sword in hand, and hatless. A dozen men went at him with rapiers, but the unlucky one was on his feet in an instant facing the miscreants with a laugh on his lips.

"Come on, scum of Paris!" he was casting into their teeth in fearless tones. "'Tis not the first time I've met you. The sword of De Plessis is good for some more hearts. You've followed me from the house of Odette, the King's companion, and my blade yearns for your hearts' blood."

De Lux, who was hastening to the man's assistance, stopped like one shot. This man was Odette's friend. Why not let the night owls finish him? If he escaped he might be a trouble-maker in his way.

All at once De Plessis assumed the offensive so furiously that the whole posse fell back in disorder. He drove them at the rapier's point from the wineshop. De Lux was overpowered with amazement. His nerves went mad when

De Plessis turned on his heel, and facing the breathless spectators, cried out:

"Who else wants the rapier's point? Do you, monsieur?" and he looked straight into the eyes of the silent De Lux.

CHAPTER XIV.

RUPERT DE LUX had seen too much of De Plessis' swordplay to accept the challenge thrust into his teeth. He did not care to have a bout with the man with the rapier, and therefore held his peace.

"The quarrel is not mine," thought he. "So this is the lover of the Queen's rival, and I may have to deal with him some other time."

The street outlaws who had attacked him had had enough of his steel, and having beaten a hasty retreat somewhere in a dark corner, were vowing future vengeance with all the customary oaths they could think of.

When he had quaffed a flagon of wine, De Plessis, after doffing his plumed hat to those inside the wineshop, made his way to the street.

"He knows the rapier," said one of the spectators of the brawl to his companions. "By the saints! I hope I may never have a cause to cross him."

"He is not French," remarked another.

"No, only one of those foreign swashbucklers who just now are making pleasure in Paris disagreeable. He looks Flemish, but he is not of that people."

"He looks more Burgundian to me," said another of the crowd, turning swiftly upon De Lux. "How do you count him, monsieur?"

"He is Burgundian," was the reply. "One of those adventurers whose blade is ever in the market."

"Well, I'm not going to bargain for it," came the retort, at which the others laughed.

Meantime De Plessis was far from the scene of his adventure, his mind upon quite upon another matter. His last interview with Duke Philip had not passed away.

"If I could only see the King privately," thought he. "The Duke said it will be the death of me to enter the palace; but how can I get the King's ear otherwise? Odette has told me of the back stairway and of the private entrance. Why not try them? The day is but a foot high, and Charles holds no audiences at this hour. It's worth the trial if for nothing else than to try the Duke's words."

Forthwith he suddenly turned in direction of the royal palace, and erelong brought up in the rear of the gardens. To get into them he found no trick at all; his cunning discovered the hidden entrance where Odette told him it was to be found.

Fortune was favoring De Plessis, and before long he was in a narrow passage at the foot of a stairway just discernible in the grayish light. The young Burgundian tiptoed up the narrow steps until he was faced by another door which yielded to him, and he stepped into a long corridor. He was in the danger zone.

To tarry there meant discovery, so he advanced between the walls till the light showed him a door which bore the royal arms. To knock or to open without ceremony was now the question, for Odette had told him that Charles seldom turned a key, and remembering this, De Plessis turned the knob slowly and pushed the portal inward.

On the threshold he stopped suddenly and stared. The King was asleep in his chair, at his elbow a glass of wine, and touching it a long gold-hilted rapier ready for instant use.

The thin, careworn face of Charles attracted the youth's attention. He could see the ravages made by the malady which was hurrying him to the tomb, and knew that erelong the crown would rest upon the brow of another.

De Plessis pitied the King. Odette had told him so much that all her stories now seemed confirmed, and he thought of withdrawing without disturbing the monarch's slumbers.

All at once a golden parrot in a cage suspended from the ceiling sent up a remonstrance to the intrusion, and the King raised his head. He was scolding the bird in unkingly language when he observed the intruder. In an instant his hand moved toward the rapier on the table, when De Plessis sprang forward and moved it farther from his reach.

"I am your majesty's friend," he hastened to say. "There is no point to my rapier when I stand in the King's presence."

Charles' ardor abated. The mad look left his eyes, and he stared at De Plessis.

"I come as Odette's friend," the Burgundian went on. "Were she not in Paris I would not be here."

A little smile rested on the ghastly face of the French King.

"What has happened to my fair Odette?" he presently asked, with fear illy concealed in his voice.

"Nothing so far as I know, your majesty," answered De Plessis. "Odette's friend can be nothing less than the King's."

"That is good speech," was the reply. "And so you, as her friend, have come to see me?"

"Such is my mission."

"Then have the goodness to secure yon door," which De Plessis did before turning again to Charles.

"Your name, messire?" the latter asked.

"I am De Plessis of Burgundy."

"I have heard Odette make speech of you," smiled Charles. "I believe I can trust her friends."

"Your majesty can trust De Plessis, at any rate," was the reply.

"Your mission then?"

"I have come to offer my sword to Charles of France. I am here for no other purpose."

The long, thin hand which the dying King reached out was tenderly yet firmly taken by De Plessis, and the touch sent a thrill thru his frame.

"You think then, messire, that the King needs a sword from Burgundy?" he said, in a feeble voice. "How good of you, messire."

How far this conversation would have gone on is not known, for all at once footfalls were heard in the passage beyond the door. Instantly the King snatched the rapier from the table, and his deep-set eyes flashed with the flame of battle.

"Always watched!" cried he, with a smile at De Plessis. "Was ever a monarch so hounded before?"

The footfalls halted at the door, and there was stillness without.

"I hear that footfall in my dreams," murmured Charles. "I would recognize it in the streets of Paris."

"Ah!"

"'Tis the Queen's," the King went on. "She's an early riser. The devil wakens her at all hours."

De Plessis did not reply.

"She is out there with her ear to the keyhole, listening as Satan did in the Garden of Eden."

"Shall I open to her, majesty?"

Charles shrank back into the depths of his chair.

"Not yet, messire," he whispered. "So you are my friend?"

"To the death, your majesty."

"Let the conspirators know it, and your life won't be worth the life of a fly. Come nearer and we will outwit my royal spouse."

De Plessis drew nearer, and the two conversed for ten minutes in cautious whispers.

"You will forget nothing?" asked Charles VI., at the end. "I like you already, messire. To have a friend who carries a rapier like that brings me gladness in my solitude. Remember my every word. Forget nothing at all. Your rapier may be needed in my service. Aha! the petticoated listener has gone. Now's your time, messire."

There was a handclasp, and De Plessis knew that the interview was over.

Once more he stood in the corridor without. No one was in sight. He turned to the door which had brought him into the passage, and made his way down it on tiptoe. His hand was always at the hilt of his weapon. In the grayish light that prevailed he searched for the button which would swing back the concealed door, and found it at last.

"Robber!" fell suddenly upon his ears, and he whirled like one at whose heels a serpent's hiss has sounded.

A dark-robed woman stood before him, a woman whose carriage even where there was little light told him that it was the Queen. Desperation at once seized De Plessis.

"Who summoned you to this palace?" came thru Isabel's welded lips.

"No one, your majesty," answered the Burgundian.

"You are sure the King did not send for you?"

"Never surer of anything in my life."

The hood which until now had partly concealed the Queen's features was suddenly thrown back, and he beheld fully the face of the woman before him.

"Who art thou?" asked Isabel.

"Ask the King," was the retort.

"What was your mission in the royal chambers?"

"His majesty may unfold that secret if he will."

The Queen bit her lips in her passion.

"I could have an interview at no other time. It was this hour or never. Good night, your majesty."

De Plessis threw open the little door which led to the dark staircase and the door leading into the royal gardens.

He heard a good French oath overhead. A weapon flashed, something stung him on the shoulder, and stumbling down the steps De Plessis threw wide the last portal and plunged headlong into the morning light beyond.

CHAPTER XV.

THE rivals had met, De Plessis for the King, De Lux for the Queen. When De Plessis found himself on the outside of the palace with the Queen's shot still stinging his shoulder, he secretly resolved that it should not be the last encounter with the Bavarian. He made off as rapidly as possibly, first thinking of going to Odette to have his hurt dressed, but instead he sought out a little pharmacy where he was attended to by the clerk who knew something about wounds.

Then he went back to the lodgings he had hired after withdrawing from the House of the Sword, where he feared Duke Philip might be looking for him. As for the Duke, he was elsewhere, letting out all to himself his opinion of Orleans, knowing nothing of the duel in the palace between the King and his brother.

The Duke had discovered that Orleans had supplanted him in the Queen's favor, and henceforth there was to be no peace between them. He knew of the armed bands that were being brought into Paris by Orleans, and felt that the Queen was in the plot and that all was against the mad King.

"If De Plessis had put the Devil's Sister out of the way by treating her to a bath in the Seine, I'd be content, but instead he merely killed her ape," he told himself. "Wait till I lay hands on the young lout. I'll treat him to a bit of Burgundian grace he may not fancy."

It was night again, and the Duke thought he might venture out and discover something which later on might redound to his advantage. He might descend upon the house in the street where the old woman with the diamonds dwelt, for had not De Plessis made way with her terrible guardian? But Duke Philip did not care to encounter the Devil's Sister, not even when she was alone and unprotected. Therefore he walked in an opposite direction from her abode, always with his hand on the hilt of his rapier.

Suddenly he slipped into an area, for he had heard the tramp of men, and as he peered out he beheld a company of men under the leadership of a captain whom he knew to be close to Orleans.

"A pretty lot of cutthroats!" commented the Duke, regarding the band till it was out of sight. "It's all Orleans' work, and the Queen is at the bottom of the whole thing."

On second thought Philip fell in behind the band, but at a respectful distance, watching the scene with the eyes of a hawk. It was a long tramp they led him, but at last the adventurers became hidden among a row of buildings which had once been used for a barrack. They had reached their prescribed quarters, and Burgundy drew back.

At this juncture there leaped from the shadow of a building a man who centered Philip with his eyes.

"A spy, by my troth!" exclaimed this individual. "And my orders are to run all such thru without so much as a moment's grace."

Philip of Burgundy did not hear the silken footstep behind him. He was totally without knowledge of the man's presence until a rapier was thrust into his body from behind, and he tumbled forward and lay still.

"One spy less for my master," mumbled the victor. "Let him rot where he has fallen," and with one more look at his work he whirled on his heel and disappeared.

For some moments Philip did not stir, then there were contortions of his body, and he finally gained his feet and made out to move away, steadying himself by the walls of the houses along the street. He said nothing. There was blood on his lips. Now and then a quiver swept over his frame, and he went on like a dying man seeking shelter somewhere.

Presently he looked up and noticed that he was in front of a surgeon's house, the door of which he pushed open without knocking. He stumbled up a flight of dimly lighted steps and sprawled into a room where he was greeted with an exclamation of surprise.

M. Leon, the surgeon, thus disturbed at such an hour, stooped over the groaning Duke and placed him on a pallet.

"My dukedom for my life!" moaned Philip. "I've been thrust thru and thru by a miscreant."

"Lie still, man, till I see how grievously you have been handled," admonished M. Leon. "It might have been worse. A rib has turned the blade in the right direction."

The shadow of a smile stole over Philip's face.

"Then I'm not yet booked for the world eternal?"

"Not yet, sir."

The Duke grated his teeth while he was trussed up by the surgeon's skill.

"What was that you said about your dukedom?" asked M. Leon.

"I am Philip, Duke of Burgundy."

"Oh," grinned M. Leon, "they spit dukes as well as rapscallions in Paris just now."

"I'll do some spitting myself later on," growled the Duke.

"Of course. Turn about is fair play."

"I'll make it so, at any rate," was the reply. "I'll go now, with your permission."

"With such a wound as that?"

"Why not? You keep no hospital here," smiled the wan-faced Philip.

"But I can find you quarters near by where I can visit you as the case demands."

"Get me somewhere, then."

Helped along the street by M. Leon, the Duke was assisted up a flight of stairs and placed on a cot in a vacant room.

"The nurse will soon be here," explained the surgeon. "She seems to be out just now."

In a few minutes the Duke was alone in the darkened chamber, the furnishings of which denoted wealth in contrast to the smallness of the apartment. He lay back on the pallet and thought of his mishap. How long would his hurt lay him up? And what might not happen ere he was on his feet again?

He was sure he had been rapiered by one of Orleans' men, and thoughts of vengeance took possession of his heart. He would seek out the Prince as soon as he could get upon his feet. It would be sword and sword between them from now on. He panted for the blood of Orleans. Queen Isabel should lose her coplotter. He (Philip) would see to that. Orleans blood was no richer than that of Burgundy. He would let it out without mercy, and when he had done so he would openly defy the Queen and come out boldly for Charles VI.

Moments seemed hours on leaden wings to the man on the pallet. The silence of the chamber was almost palpable. And his nurse? Who would she be when she came? The Duke hoped she would be young and beautiful, some pretty one with an angel's face and hands of silk.

After all, he was not so badly hurt. The man's rapier had been thrown aside by a friendly rib, and M. Leon had assured him that he would be himself again.

Time wore on. No noises seemed to enter the chamber. He might as well be on some island in the sea to which sounds never came. At length he heard approaching footsteps. Some one was ascending the stair up which M. Leon had carried him.

"At last!" cried the Duke of Burgundy. "I am about to see my nurse."

He fell back on the pillow and waited.

Once more seconds became hours, and he found impatience tugging at his heartstrings. A door opened in the dark. Somebody came shambling in.

"No seraph's footsteps in that walk," went thru Philip's brain.

"Where did this odor of liniment come from?" said a voice that startled the Duke. "Who's been here?"

A light was struck, and its beams slowly penetrated the darkness, for he had been left by M. Leon in total gloom. The Duke soon made out the figure of a woman who picked up the light and turned it slowly so as to pierce every quarter.

"Ah, some one on the bed!" the creature suddenly exclaimed. "I keep no hospital." And then, lamp in hand, she came over to where the Burgundian was lying.

Her face was shadowed for a moment, but as she bent over the cot, at the same time revealing her face, Philip uttered a cry and shrank away.

"So 'tis you, my lord!" exclaimed the woman. "So 'tis the devil Duke of Burgundy. What fortune brought you into my abode? Winged, eh? But winged or no, how came you here?"

The Duke tried but could not find his tongue. He was looking into a face he had seen before; he was staring at a pair of eyes which burned like coals in the nethermost pit. Why had M. Leon brought him to that house? Philip might well ask himself that question, for he was gazing into the face of the Devil's Sister!

CHAPTER XVI.

SOMETHING had happened in the old city by the Seine. For three days nothing had been heard of Louis of Orleans and the Duke of Burgundy. Charles thought he knew what had become of his brother, but he was going to keep the secret, and the Duke's adherents were puzzled concerning his absence.

The effect of Orleans' disappearance had had one result, the ruffians who had come into Paris in varied garb and from their kennels in other cities were silently getting out of it. Night by night they were folding their tents like the Arabs and seeking other quarters where their swords could find another market. The people noticed this and wondered.

As for Philip of Burgundy, he was still an inmate of the house of the Devil's Sister, and, strange to say, she was nursing him back to life with the assistance of Doctor Leon. These two strange persons were talking about old Burgundy, and Philip was getting on very well with the woman to kill whom he had once sent De Plessis.

If these mysteries were on the streets, they were not unknown in the palace. Queen Isabel was wondering, too. Her spies had failed to trace Orleans. She still mourned the theft of the jewels of Jezebel, tho she knew the thief. Her attempt on the life of Odette had failed, and the beautiful Burgundian was still amusing the King.

She resolved to make one more attempt to find the gems, and so when the clocks of Paris were striking the midnight hour she glided to the King's door and listened. She knew, however, that but an hour before he had slipped out of the palace, and in one of his peculiar tantrums had taken it into his head to visit the outer world incognito.

Now was her time. The door of the royal chamber was locked, but taking a key from a pocket in her tunic, she opened it and stole into the chamber.

Once more she moved about the room intent on her nocturnal purpose, for now or never she would find the jewels of Jezebel. It was not likely that Charles would return much before dawn, therefore she had plenty of time on her hands, and she would make the best possible use of it.

Round and round the room she went with the hunting qualities of a fox. She sounded the walls in every direction; her eyes and hands were everywhere. Suddenly she uttered a cry, for a concealed door had opened, and she beheld the lost casket. The famous jewels were hers at last! What she and Orleans had failed to recover she had found at last, and her face was flushed with victory.

Closing the secret door, she went over

(Continued on Page 14.)

HIS STRANGE TASK

Or, When Fate Sat at the Wheel

By Mason Ray

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CHAPTER V.

THE morning after her hasty marriage, which had been followed later by her abduction, Adora, in a ravishing morning robe, munched her breakfast toast and read the morning daily. In the feminine manner she began at the last page and worked toward the front among absorbing bargain sales. Finally she spread open the main page and was instantly confronted by a lifelike cut of Paul Westveer. The accompanying article told of his appearance in the city the evening before, of his boldly registering at the city's best hotel, of the small fortune he had stored with the clerk, and finally stated that detectives expected to land him behind the bars before night.

"Such fools!" ejaculated the amazed reader. "Such blithering idiots! Jail Paul with Norton in the city!"

She sat very still, thinking. By degrees she understood the police viewpoint. Seydel had not advertised his presence. To the law he was still dead. He had come straight to her, and in the rebound from despair over his fate to gladness that he lived she had straightway married him. It was the act of a silly fool. Thanks to Paul it was but a flash in the pan. If Norton attempted to hold her to the unconsidered marriage vow she'd exhibit assortments of temper that would sicken him of his bargain. It was all Paul Westveer's fault. Perhaps if he'd stood his ground instead of flying from the action of the grand jury she'd have remained true to him. Anyhow, she'd do him a good turn. She'd set right this misapprehension of the police and press at once.

With unusual dispatch she dressed in a street suit of brown with facings of gay plaid and a coquettish turban of felt with a twist of plaid about the crown.

"Tell father," she instructed the housekeeper, who had ordered her runabout, "that Gilson's driving me to town."

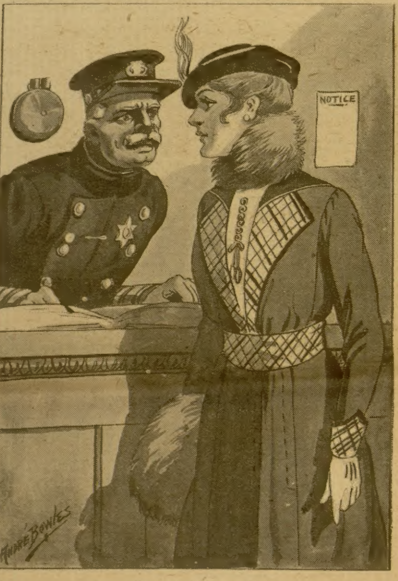
"Very well, Miss Dora," said the privileged member of their family. She regarded Adora with a quizzical smile while the girl adjusted hatpins and a tiny veil that came precisely to the tip of her nose. Then she expressed what was in her mind. "Better not marry anybody today," she advised with a laugh.

"Nor tomorrow—or ever," promised Adora, gayly, and emphasized the pledge with a hug and kiss. Then she tripped lightly along the path to Gilson and the family runabout left for her use since the doctor was off in the big car which he drove himself.

Gilson's pace into the city was a sharp contrast to that of Adora's homecoming. Its moderation got on her nerves. She urged haste until she in turn got on Gilson's nerves and made him attempt the impossible with near disaster. Finally they drew up at police headquarters. As Adora entered the room Lieutenant Frank Karreman, with head lowered, was writing at his desk. Suddenly a folded newspaper, headline up, eclipsed his work.

"I want you to stop hounding that perfectly innocent man," said a clear, musical voice at his ear.

"The devil, you do!" burst from the annoyed officer. Then, looking up, he saw an adorably pretty girl, a girl with a piquant face and big, light-filled brown eyes.



"The devil you do!"

"Paul Westveer never murdered his kinsman," half quoted Adora.

"Indeed," said Karreman. "How do you know?"

"Because," explained Adora, "I married Norton Seydel last evening. There's my marriage certificate."

Lieutenant Karreman examined the document.

"Anybody might write that," said he. "Where's the husband?"

This was a poser. Adora didn't know and admitted the fact.

"And I don't want to know," she declared. "I never want to see him again, dead or alive."

"Hum!" grunted the officer. "Looks like spite—and a trumped-up story. Either you produce Seydel, whole and alive and identified, or Westveer stands trial—when we catch him."

Adora argued, entreated, stormed. She was beating against a stone wall. The law recognized only proved facts. It was her own and her father's word for it, and one or both might be doubted. She flung out of the room and had Gilson drive her to a drug store, where she called up every place in the city where Seydel might lodge. He was at none of the hotels.

"Plague take the man!" she chafed. "What's he up to?"

Thinking hard, she revisioned her groom's mortal terror at the mention of Westveer's name. Was this emotion caused by jealousy? Her instinct and reason both denied this. Men don't tremble and turn ashen for the love of a woman. Jealousy didn't bleach a man to marble and make his eyes protrude. Then what terrified him? She determined to dismiss Gilson and go home by train. She wanted to talk matters over with her special friend, Clara Lawton, and Clara lived halfway at one of the substations. Perhaps their combined wits might hit on the truth.

"We've five minutes to catch the train," she told Gilson. "I'm going to Lawton's."

When they sighted the train, car steps were being lifted, but a brakeman reached Adora a helping hand at the rear coach. Nimbly she sprang to the observation platform—and faced Norton Seydel!

"You're not going," she shrieked at him, "till you clear Paul! Do you hear?"

Her angry fingers gripped his coat. She instantly comprehended his purpose. To punish herself for deserting him and Paul for abducting her he intended again to disappear.

"You'll stay till you're identified," she told him tensely. "You sneak, you cad!" She drew him swiftly to the platform rail. "Come," she demanded. "Stop till you clear Paul!"

In an ecstasy of terror at the name Seydel lifted her bodily.

"You hell-cat!" he cried, and dropped her to the track as the express gathered full speed and pursued its way.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE same hour Jack Stafford, seated in a shabby chair of his inexpensive room, moodily examined the same morning edition read by Adora McKee. It told him that he, as Westveer, was still in danger of arrest. It meant the authorities were still in ignorance of his supposed victim's healthy condition. He thought of Seydel as Adora's husband and writhed at the horror of it. Would she go back to him? Then came to him a vision of Seydel's pitiful sacrifice under the north Wisconsin sod, and rage at the brute possessed him. In the name of the dead man he once more vowed vengeance. But according to his solemn agreement it was apparently to come from the living Paul Westveer. Converging motives impelled him to go on with his sacred agreement, and to do this he must have unlimited means.

"Talk of stone walls," he mused; "I'm up against reinforced concrete! If I show up at the hotel and demand my roll the police'll be waiting. The result would be a lot of skyrocket publicity. It would put Seydel wise. And to charge Seydel with his crime would be useless. Even if he dragged officers North to inspect the remains they'd accuse him! They'll say he murdered the millionaire and profited by the crime. Seydel might even beat him to the spot and move his cousin's body. He might find there was nothing to exhibit but a hole in the ground.

"If I only had a car!" he groaned.

Without swift motion he was lost. His wits were numb. He thought of the checks signed in Westveer's characteristic script. To present one invited instant trouble, but he'd risk it. A swift move might win out against furtive waiting. He started to his feet and bounded down the dingy stairs. In the street he hailed a jitney car and named his bank.

"That for speed," said he, and urged on the driver a bill—his last. It gave him his desire as nearly as a driver might defy city regulations. At the bank he retained the motor while he entered and approached the paying teller's desk.

"I see you know me," he remarked, and thrust a filled-in check under the wicket.

The man hesitated, examined the signature, and showed it covertly to a receiving teller at the next division. The two briefly conferred, then the paying

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Be sure to ask for the double strength othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

EXPERIMENTS

Teach Things of Value.

Where one has never made the experiment of leaving off coffee and drinking Postum, it is still easy to learn something about it by reading the experiences of others.

Drinking Postum is a pleasant way out of coffee troubles. A Penn. man says:

"My wife was a victim of nervousness, weak stomach and loss of appetite for years; and although we resorted to numerous methods for relief, one of which was a change from coffee to tea, it was all to no purpose.

"We knew coffee was causing the trouble, but could not find anything to take its place until we tried Postum. Within two weeks after she quit coffee and began using Postum almost all of her troubles had disappeared as if by magic. It was truly wonderful. Her nervousness was gone, stomach trouble relieved, appetite improved and, above all, a night's rest was complete and refreshing.

"This sounds like an exaggeration, as it all happened so quickly. Each day there was improvement, for the Postum was undoubtedly strengthening her. Every particle of this good work is due to drinking Postum in place of coffee." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Postum comes in two forms:

Postum Cereal—the original form—must be well boiled. 15c and 25c pkgs.

Instant Postum—a soluble powder—dissolves quickly in a cup of hot water, and, with cream and sugar, makes a delicious beverage **instantly**. 30c and 50c tins.

Both forms are equally delicious and cost about the same per cup.

"There's a Reason" for Postum.

—sold by Grocers.

teller came back with the large amount named, and counted it into Stafford's hand. The last look from his somewhat protuberant eyes had a peculiar glint. It meant, Stafford thought, a 'phoned message to detectives. Without haste he rejoined the waiting car, and gave a distinctly audible direction. It was the address of Zolla and Gates' sales garage. They angled thru a quiet street and into a main avenue. At the garage doors where he had so lately delivered a mud-spattered automobile he dismissed the hired vehicle. Within, he encountered the black-eyed manager.

"You—you—back here?" he fumed. "For a stiver I'd have you fined. That gray roadster's ruined. Venderwal refused it. It's on our hands. If you were anything but a beggar I'd have it out of you."

"I'm sorry," declared Stafford. "Fact is I forgot myself and ran too far. Anybody like me that's a combination of spark-plug and carbureter 'u'd do the same. I'm just car crazy—that's what. I'd rather drive than eat. I'd——"

At that point the thing happened for which he planned and was killing time while he waited.

"Paul Westveer," said a voice at his back, "I arrest you in the name of——"

"Mud!" cried Stafford, turning to face the officer. "Nothing ails the blamed car but mud. Look at it. I leave it to you."

"Mud?" echoed Jewett. "Look at it, officers! I send out a prime car in its dress case for this fool to test, and he slams it a hundred miles and fetches it back like that. He messes it up and takes the life out of it. He spoils the sale. He——"

"What the deuce you beefing about?" interrupted the officer, and his two assistants burst into laughter.

"About the car, the five-thousand-dollar car," said Jewett. "This fool messed it up and it's on our hands. There it is; look it over."

Instead, the three eyed Stafford, who stood with drooping shoulders and apologetic mien. At the moment he was the discharged employe who regretted the loss of a job. He tried to answer Jewett's heated recrimination. He spoke of his faithful months of service. For a minute the bored police listened, then they precipitately piled into their car and vanished.

"You're doing me an injustice," stated Stafford. "If I've injured the machine I'm willing to pay for it. I'll pay for it if it takes the last cent of my recent inheritance." He inserted a hand in his pocket and placed the sum mentioned in Jewett's nerveless fingers. "There's the price, and in exchange I want the machine. And I want it now."

"Why—why," stuttered the astonished and relieved Jewett. "My dear boy, I'd no idea——"

"Of course not," agreed the ex-car-tester. "May I have it?"

Jewett consented with alacrity. He even assisted in filling the oil tank and extra reservoir. Not only did he hasten the transfer, but he urged dispatch. Within five minutes Stafford was behind the steering wheel guiding his beloved roadster out of the city into quiet byways. His ruse had worked. The officers who had followed him at a brief hint from the paying teller found Jewett rowing with a discharged employe. The scene carried conviction. It was not staged. And they were not anxious to make laughingstocks of themselves by bringing a discharged chauffeur in lieu of an escaped millionaire murderer. In short, Stafford had at one and the same time fooled the police and secured his car. By the time they began to kick themselves for not searching him for the Westveer cash he'd be far away and safely hidden.

As he shot along a country road the engine seemed to throb in unison with his own pulse. He felt as if he were part of the speeding car like a modern centaur. Out of that State he drove and into the next, where the Westveer villa overlooked a lake noted for homes of wealth. Into his mind had come a settled design. It was hazardous. It was unique. It bade for favor because of its daring. He intended to inhabit Westveer's home—the last place police would search—and there within the walls of a place saturated with his friend's individuality he would make himself letter perfect. He would become Westveer. After that he would seek and mete out justice to Westveer's destroyer.

When he finally reached his destination after driving a circuitous route, the lake glittered like molten jewels under a brilliant sunset, and the wide sweep of beach road seemed an avenue leading to paradise. It was no trick to find the place he sought. Its name, Oak Lodge, appeared in grillwork above the entrance gate precisely as it was photographed for illustrations in the press. A wide graveled drive led on among great shade trees to the low terrace in front of the handsome summer residence, parted like a split ribbon and curved at each side to the rear. The unlocked gate swung open by a device that permitted a driver to pass in or out without alighting. He wondered what reception he would receive from the caretakers. Would they accept or reject him? It would be a test. He swerved to a closed building near a barn that was evidently a garage. At once an alert, aged man hurried toward him from the stable. For a moment he stood peering at him from pale rheumy eyes.

"Of course you know me," said the impostor. "I've come here to hide."

"The car fooled me," said the old man, at length. "It's a new trade, but you handle it fine."

"Help me put it in the garage," Stafford ordered. "I want it handy. Open the doors."

"It'll set folk talking," objected the old caretaker. "It's fair flagging the police to have it about."

"Don't worry," Stafford told him. "In a pinch it's a magician's mat." He smiled, and the smile so changed the expression of his face that the half-deaf, half-blind old man stared in wonder. For a time he stood like one in a trance, then dutifully preceded the newcomer to the great oak entrance and delivered him without further speech to a gentle-faced woman—his wife—whom he summoned from some invisible region. She, at least, was outspoken in her greeting and set the impostor's heart at rest.

"Lad, but you're changed!" she cried. "And brown and hearty! I dunno's as I'd made sure o' you but for that old suit o' clothes and your bonny blue eyes."

Neither of them mentioned his crime. Neither of them named him. But when Mrs. McCulloch relieved him of his hat and noted the uprolling wave of sunny hair her manner was even more cordial. Luckily she insisted upon accompanying him to the door of his room to see that all was as it should be on such short notice. She lingered to take ghostly covers from a couch and two armchairs. Then the impostor was alone in Westveer's luxurious suite, but he fancied that the mild-visaged housekeeper paused outside the door as if listening. Absurd! He was fanciful. This hated impersonation was getting on his nerves. His business was to forget himself and exhaustively study a part. So he began by inspecting his quarters so daringly won. He found, as he hoped, a wardrobe filled with Westveer's discarded clothes. A desk and cabinet contained files of letters and bundles of papers. One drawer was filled with prints and old photographs. Several of the portraits showed Westveer in different poses and were an aid to his would-be double.

During a tranquil period that seemed a lull before a storm, he watched the dailies old McCulloch brought him for news of his enemy and patiently perfected his part. Points culled from Mrs. McCulloch's rare talks gave him Paul Westveer's tastes, mannerisms, and choice of books. He commenced to read that he might not be tripped by a reference to some favorite author. Mentally and physically he copied the dead master of Oak Lodge. He became fastidious about his person, slow, dignified, and silent. The fifth day of his self-imprisonment he had his plunge and clad himself in one of Paul's distinctive suits. His high-combed hair added to his athletic inches, each detail was carefully thought out. On his left hand was Paul's heavy ring of hammered gold. Its guard was virgin metal in the form of a pick and shovel, souvenir of a Klondike trip, and his scarfpin was its mate.

All day he occupied the library. After his luncheon of dishes Mrs. McCulloch especially prepared according to her idea of his likings, he returned to his huge easy chair by the grate fire in the room of books. He selected a handsomely bound volume of Thackeray, and with ringed hand holding the book he became absorbed in the varied adventures of Becky Sharp. So lost was he to his surroundings that he failed to hear the door open, and missed the patter of quick steps. Then an astounding thing happened. Soft arms stole about his neck, warm lips kissed him directly on the mouth. A woman's head blotted out the page. Then came a feminine shriek. The arms loosened, and the woman sprang back confronting him with piquant face aflame. He gazed up at Seydel's bride—the willful, vindictive Adora McKee!

CHAPTER VII.

"WHY—why," she panted, "you're not Paul Westveer! You're a cheat tricked out in his clothes and rings. Good Lord," cried she, "you're not even a good copy!"

Alternately paling and flushing, as waves of shame or anger swept over her, she stood before him with dark eyes snapping. It but added to her beauty. In her natty suit of dark blue, with facings of cardinal silk and hat to correspond, she was bewitchingly lovely.

"I came here," she told him in a tense voice, "to go down on my knees and ask pardon of the best man that ever lived for being a wicked, silly fool. And I find you!"

Stafford was on his feet. His paralyzed tongue resumed its office.

"Prove what you say," he demanded.

"Nothing's easier," she cried. "You're the reckless driver who snatched me from under Norton's very nose, while Paul loathed a car and couldn't drive. And he was stolid and quiet while you're electric. He was retiring and unassuming, while you have the nerve of a goat. And," she finished with cheeks aflame and eyes lowered, "your lips are—oh, I can't tell you, but I knew instantly!"

"You've guessed the truth," said Stafford, gravely. "Sit down while I state my case. You owe me a hearing," he insisted. "Since you accuse me of crime I've a right to put you in possession of facts." He waited till she was seated, and her act argued that she was oddly enough willing to listen.

"I am Jack Stafford, a recent employe at the sales garage of Zolla and Gates of your home city," he began. "My business was to take out new motors in racing trim and try them out for purchasers who desired speed. Ten days ago I was sent out with a high-powered engine intended for a rich patron. The car bewitched me. I'm motor mad. I literally eloped with that special roadster and ran up into northern Wisconsin before I realized the distance I'd traveled. In the big forest reserve a spring downpour drove me into a log hunting lodge for shelter. And there, mortally wounded, I found——"

"Paul Westveer!" breathed the girl. Her intense gaze probed his very soul.

"He'd been stabbed and left supposedly dead by——"

"Wait," said Adora, with fingers touching his arm. "Let me finish. He'd been stabbed by the man I foolishly married, and from whom you saved me."

"Yes," said Stafford.

Adora's eyes were horror-filled. Her danger had been so appalling she lacked words to express her gratitude for his act.

"Westveer lived the greater part of that night. And during that time he urged me to assume the strangest task one man ever demanded of another. He asked me to assume his name and live out my life as his. He provided for accidents to his astounding plan by this."

He handed her Paul's will in his peculiar chirography. And as he related the story of that drear watch beside her dying sweetheart her expression told him that every word rang true. She believed him. Her tears finally testified to that.

"If it hadn't been for you," she sobbed, "Paul would have perished alone, and I'd be the wife of a murderer, a worse than murderer. You've undertaken the bravest, noblest, friendliest thing ever known." Her excitement brought her to her feet. "I'll help you," she declared. "If you need me at any time to help out your impersonation I'll come to you. But you must keep your secret. No policeman would listen to reason. They're a lot of swell-headed idiots." She told him of her experience with the lieutenant, of her encounter with Seydel at the train, and of his awful fright at the mention of his cousin's name after their night ride.

"I made up my mind to find you—I mean Paul," she told him. "And after a long time it popped into my head to look for you here. That's how——"

She broke off, her face crimsoned at memory of her recent greeting, and at that moment the door opened to admit Mrs. McCulloch. Her trembling person and flushed face indicated great mental

(Continued on Page 12.)

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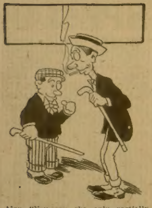


Algy—"You say she only partially returned your affection?"

Clarence—"Yes, she returned all the love letters, but retained all the jewelry."

Naturally.

"He's a very polished gentleman."

"That's why he shines in society."

Its Original Condition.

"You remember selling me some hair restorer when I called the other day to get shaved, you hoary-headed old thief?" roared the indignant customer. "You sold it under false pretenses, sir. You said it would restore my head to its original condition."

"Well, didn't it work?" asked the barber.

"Work? No. It's taken off what little hair I used to have, and I am as bald as a pavement now."

"That's quite right, sir. No false pretense about that. I said it would restore your head to its original condition, and you know, sir, most of us are born bald."

The Wrong Order.

The court clerk was examining an applicant for citizenship papers. Unfortunately, the clerk didn't ask his questions in the order in which the man from across the seas had been taught the answers.

"Do you speak English?" asked the clerk.

"Sure, Mike!" was the answer.

"How long have you been in this country?"

"Michigan."

"How tall are you?"

"Forty years."

The clerk sighed. "I think you'd better get an interpreter," he said.

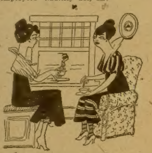
He Wasn't Warned.

A well-known citizen of Chicago registered at the Hotel Cecil in London recently, and was assigned to a room on next to the top floor. The following morning he rang for a bellboy. When there was no response to the second call he lifted the telephone receiver and waited in vain for "Are you there?" Failing to establish any communication with the office, he dressed and started for the office to register indignation. The elevator wasn't running. He began to walk down. On the fourth landing he met a housemaid and asked in strong Chicago language what was the matter with the hotel.

"Well, sir, you see, sir," came the answer, "the Zeppelins were reported, and we were all ordered to the cellar for safety."

Then the visitor's language grew still stronger, and he completed his remarks by saying: "Well, I'm on the next to the top floor and I wasn't warned."

"No, sir," was the bland reply, "but you see, sir, you don't come under the employers' liability act, sir."



Belle—"That coffee urn you gave them for a wedding gift is awfully heavy."

June—"Yes, when she shies it across the table at him I want him to feel it! He jilted my sister Jane!"

He Gave a Good Example.

A browbeating lawyer was demanding that a witness answer a certain question either in the negative or affirmative.

"I cannot do it," said the witness. "There are some questions that cannot be answered by a 'yes' or a 'no,' as any one knows."

"I defy you to give an example to the court," thundered the lawyer.

The retort came like a flash: "Are you still beating your wife?"

Choice of Stings.

Rankin—"This looks like artificial honey, and I'll bet a cookie a bee never saw it."

Phyle—"Then I don't envy you."

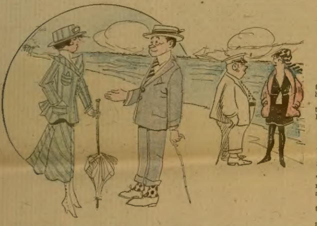
"What do you mean?"

"I'd rather be stung by a bee than by that honey."

Regular Cut-Up.

"Blanche seems to be an up-todate sort of girl."

"Up-to-date? Heavens! She's up to everything."



Belle—"Understand me, Mr. Jones! I will neither marry you nor be a sister to you nor a friend nor a close acquaintance!"

Cholly—"Well, er—couldn't we at least be lovers, then?"

He Needed the Money.

Little Edwin's weekly allowance was one cent each day, provided he took his cod-liver oil each morning regularly, and each Sunday the seven cents which he saved during the week was put into the contribution box at Sunday school.

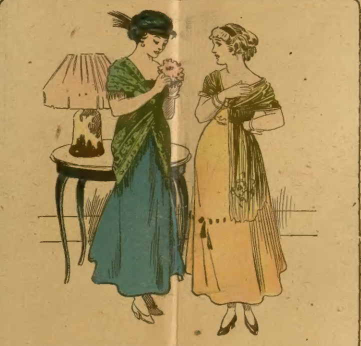
One Monday night Edwin rushed breathlessly in from school and, climbing into the cupboard, he got the bottle of much despised medicine and took it to his mother, saying: "Ma, I guess I'll take this week's physic in advance. Bill Brown an' I's goin' to the movies tonight an' I need the money."—Judge.

The Way She Understood It.

She was a young and pretty girl of a sporting turn of mind. Somehow she heard that a certain horse was to win a certain race, and, deciding to indulge in a little speculation, she went to a "bookie" and put a dollar on for a win, asking how much she would get if it came off.

"If it starts at 20 to 1 you will get $21 back," said the bookie; "if at 10 to 1, $11 back; if at 5 to 1, you'll get $6 back."

"I see," said the maiden, "and if it starts at 1 o'clock, how much do I get then?"



Mrs. B.—"Your husband says he leads a dog's life."

Mrs. W.—"Yes, it's very simple. He comes in with muddy feet, makes himself comfortable by the fire and waits to be fed."

Good Meals Seemed Rare.

In the lobby of a hotel they were talking about equivocal speeches when Henry Sydnor Harrison, the author, was reminded of a little incident.

At a dinner party somebody broached the subject of small vices. A party named Brown broke in with a dissertation on his own excellence.

"Of course, I am not criticising anybody," he said, "but personally I never drink, swear, or indulge in habits of that kind."

"But, Mr. Brown," interjected one of the company, "you certainly smoke, don't you?"

"Yes, I like a cigar after a good meal," admitted Brown, "but I suppose that on an average I don't smoke more than one a month."

Excessive Precaution.

"Where's Coyote Joe?" asked the traveling man.

"He ain't livin' in Crimson Gulch no more," replied Broncho Bob. "He got terrible unpopular."

"What was the trouble?"

"Too much preparedness. He got terrible interested in a poker game, an' was so afraid the deal wasn't goin' to suit him that he tried to prepare the deck."

A Suggestion.

"I'm still waiting for you to pay me that five dollars you owe me, Dobson."

"Oh, don't let that worry you."

"That's what I'm trying to do, but I would feel greatly encouraged if you would let it worry you occasionally."

Hard Work.

Lady Visitor (being shown trenches)—"And are they real sandbags?"

Officer—"Oh, yes!"

Lady Visitor—"Well, really! But what an awful cost it must be to send them all to the front."

His Direct Opposite.

At a dance Percival Claude was presented to a beautiful young girl from an adjoining town and during the evening it was his great happiness to lead her out among the papier mache palms for ice cream and angel cake.

"And so," said the girl, in response to Percival's story of his life, "you have never married?"

"No," answered Percival, "I shall never marry until I meet a woman who is my direct opposite."

"That should not be hard," returned the pretty one with a faint smile. "There are bright, intelligent girls in every part of the town."

Count Them.

"I'm proud to belong to the 400 of Plunkville."

"You may be right. Still, as I look at that term '400' I cannot elude the melancholy thought that it is made up mostly of ciphers."

The Way of It.

"Belle says she married a paradox."

"How's that?"

"Well, when they first married him he was quite tall, but ever since she has found he is always short."

The Two Finest Birds.

At a dinner given in India recently by the sergeants of the regiment (the arms of which contain an elephant and "Primus Indus") to the sergeants of the relieving regiment, whose badge consists of an eagle. Micky, the talkative, was asked to give a toast. "Bhoys," he said, "rise." All rose, but Mick seemed at a loss for a speech.

"Go it, Micky," said some one, encouragingly.

At last he gave the toast: "Bhoys, here's to the two foinist birds that iver flew, the aigle and the ilIphant."

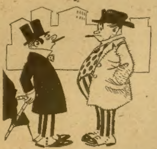
The Ultimate Consumer.

Little Sister—"I would laugh if I got a nice box of candy for my birthday."

Big Brother—"So would I."

Little Sister—"But why would you laugh?"

Big Brother—"Because I'm bigger than you are."—Judge.



"Did you enjoy the symphony concert?"

"Not a bit! A girl right in front of me was dressed so loud I couldn't hear any of the soft music."

Sympathy From the Front.

A French soldier allowed to visit Paris for a few days in order to see his three motherless children has been base enough to marry a widow with three children of her own and so to place himself beyond the reach of the military law, which excuses from service all fathers of six or more. And now his comrades at the front have sent him a letter of commiseration, assuring him that should he at any time feel the need of repose he may remember that the trenches are always open to him and that the comparatively peaceful tranquillities of the firing line are always at his service.

Not to His Taste.

"I am afraid your friend will not care to quench his thirst from our spring."

"Why not?"

"Because it is soft water and he is a hard drinker."

Little at a Time.

"Well, Donald," said the long-winded Scotch minister, "how do you like my sairmons?"

"In vairy small doses," returned the truthful Donald.

His Modest Request.

A New England housewife one afternoon received a call from a hobo to whom that morning she had given some doughnuts.

The knight of the road doffed his ragged headpiece, and with great civility addressed her thus:

"Madam, this morning you gave me three doughnuts. Would it be asking too much to request a fourth?"

"I'll be glad to give you another," said the woman, as she prepared to wrap up one in a newspaper. "So you like my doughnuts, do you?"

"It isn't that, madam," explained the hobo. "You see, some friends of mine down in the meadow wish to have a game of quoits."

The One He Liked Best.

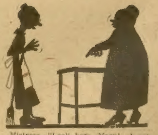
A gentleman in delivering one of a series of addresses excused himself one evening for being unable to speak on several points, the mice, he said, having destroyed part of his notes. Later, while visiting in the neighborhood, he asked one man:

"Were you at any of my lectures, Rooney?"

Rooney—"Indeed, I was, yer honor; all of them."

Lecturer—"Which one did you like best?"

Rooney—"The one the mice was at, yer honor!"



Mistress—"Look here, Mary! I can write my name on the dust on this table?"

Mary—"Dear, dear; there's nothing like being educated, is there?"

Just the Place.

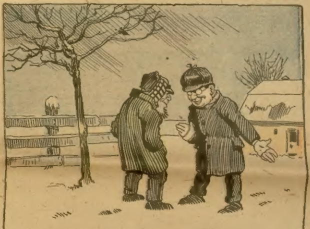
"I'd like to see that girl get along, but she hasn't enough warmth to make a success as a saleswoman."

"Take her away from the ribbon counter and put her on refrigerators."

At the Show.

Edith—"I've noticed you wiping your eyes when 'The Sorrows of Sarah' film was being shown."

Jack—"Yes, it was a moving picture."



Silas—"Did that city feller have any luck with his vegetables last year?"

Hiram—"In a way! He got a sunstroke and collected $200 from a health insurance company!"

Not Used to a Hammer.

"Sir, we are starting a new railroad, and want your daughter to drive the first spike."

"I have no doubt she will consider it an honor to officiate."

"Thank you. We have provided a small gold spike. Also a silver hammer."

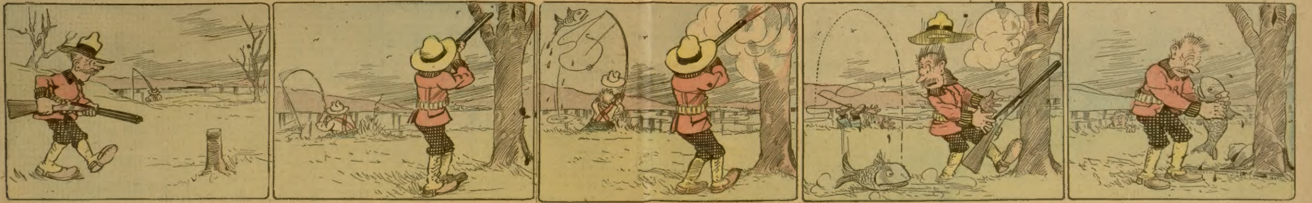
"One minute. I don't think she could drive a spike with a hammer. Better provide a hairbrush."

Carrying the Clock.

A man somewhat addicted to drink owned a fine eight-day clock. When moving he did not like to trust the clock to the tender mercies of the removal contractor, and so set out to carry it from his old abode to his new residence. When staggering along the street with the clock closely clasped in his arms he met another man, who remarked:

"Look here, old chap; I think you might afford to buy yourself a watch."

THE SQUIRREL PIE



Mr. Cityman—(Fuddled with booze)—"Hello, looks like a squirrel in that tree, and I'm goin' to take a shot at it!

"Gee whiz! It looks like two squirrels! I'll get up pretty close so I'll be sure to hit it! No, it's only one squirrel, I guess!

"Well, I bet that squirrel never cracks another nut in this world! Hope I don't blow it all to pieces so I can't have squirrel pie!

(Bang! Kerplunk!) "Ha! Ha! I got it all right! I heard it fall! But what a queer-lookin' squirrel!

"Well, for the love of Mike, how did you get so wet up in that tree?"

His Strange Task.

(Continued From Page 9.)

disturbance. When she spoke her voice shook with emotion.

"Laddie," she quavered, "John's gone for the police. At first we thought you were a detective watching for [illegible] we didna meddle. We just let you pretend what fooled nobody. Then you mimicked Paul so close we were fair dumfounded. It was uncanny. But some way I can't think you're here for burglary or mischief like that, so I'm warning you."

But Stafford was slipping into his hat and outer coat in the hall, while Mrs. McCulloch stared at Adora—an unsuspected guest.

"Wait for me at the terrace," he called back to Adora, and raced for the garage.

Immediately he was back with the long, low gray roadster and Adora sprang to the place at his side.

"I'll take you to the station," he told her above the motor's roar.

Then they sped down the driveway and out the automatically opening gate as an auto horn blared to the right. So the old people had fooled him instead of being deceived. But the warning was ample. He blessed the gentle Scotchwoman for her intervention.

Adora held her breath as they circled the lake drive at the machine's best pace. As they swung about curves the machine swayed drunkenly, then shot ahead with a vigor that whipped her veil into straight lines. It was a wild ride, far more reckless than the drive by night, but Adora gloried in the pace. Her eyes shone with pleasure. She was as enamored of speed as himself. Occasionally they slowed for other machines or rigs, then continued with every ounce of power to be coaxed from the engine. A thought struck the girl. Everything had been ready. Nothing for a swift race was forgotten. He finally relaxed speed to address her.

"I'm going to New York," he told her. "All rogues converge at the steamer lines, and that's where I'll probably find my man. I'll keep to the motor. If the police can track a shifting route and a car that changes color, they've improved. Anyway, *I'll risk it. And when I've anything to tell or need you, I'll wire."*

They were at the station where she was to take a train home. With a bound she was out.

"For Paul's sake, win!" she shouted above the motor's whir. He smiled and nodded and was off.

Toward night the fugitive discovered a byroad that led into a forest, and here he camped. Once more the car testified to readiness for a sudden and prolonged trip. Every inch of its generous reserve space was packed with food and clothes and paints. By twilight Stafford donned working clothes, and presently began adroitly to apply bottle-green to the gray surface of his roadster. He was an expert at the task. During the long, spring half-light he managed to complete the work, even to the red lines that trimmed the body. After that he was satisfied to light an alcohol lamp and brew odorous coffee, warm soup and fry bacon. With bread and a can of sweet potatoes he managed a hearty meal.

Then he smoked and thought of the girl who was ready to join him in his strange pursuit. Intuition convinced her of his sincerity when police would [illegible]. She was a good little accomplice and a dead game sport. He admired her greatly. And never before in his life had he ever cared for anything but an engine. Again he felt the soft pressure of her fragrant mouth, and his pulse raced. He recalled her horror at his revelations. He sympathized with her rage at Seydel. He realized their helplessness in bringing the man to justice. It must be a punishment of their own contriving. He knew not what. His cue was to wait and watch and manage not to give away the game by being caught. At this point in his meditations he wrapped himself in auto robes and soundly slept.

Day after day this furtive drive eastward continued. If officers of a city eyed him curiously the police of the next place glimpsed a car of different hue and a driver in another garb. After a month of wandering he neared the great metropolis and put up at a good hotel. His name on the register was again Paul West. It was a convenient sobriquet which would catch Seydel's startled eye if the murderer chanced to see it. Something told him his quarry was submerged in the great city. It was an ideal cover for them both.

With his hotel as a starting point he began to examine hotel registers for a sample of Seydel's writing such as lay in Westveer's desk. He scrutinized crowds and frequented public places. Nothing came of his efforts. He wondered if Seydel had sailed to some foreign port. For all of war-crazed Europe it was possible to hide abroad. He might be in Vancouver or Patagonia. Evidently he meant to blot himself *from earth. After all, he might be forced to have Westveer's name cleared* by Adora and her father. They'd prove the marriage. Nothing need be said of Westveer's death, and in time he'd run down the criminal. It didn't matter if it required a lifetime. He'd get him sooner or later; and it looked as if it were going to be very much later.

"A letter for you, Mr. West," a bellhop informed him one evening, after a day's futile search.

The square handed him was dainty in texture and addressed in large, round letters. Who could have written him? What human being discovered his address when he'd barely decided upon it himself? Amazed, he tore open the envelope and withdrew a cream-tinted sheet marked with a gold monogram at the head. On it was a message without the conventional beginning.

"I am dining tonight at the Imperial with Norton Seydel," were the amazing words that seemed to him written in letters of fire. Below this was traced a signature of one word and that word was Adora.

"Looks like a trap," decided the mystified recipient. "But trap or not, I, too, will dine at the Imperial. And I'll appear as nearly as possible in the character of Mr. Seydel's first cousin."

CHAPTER VIII.

WITHIN the privacy of his room Stafford again studied the cryptic communication. The childishly round script was reassuring, but Seydel himself might have penned the line. Anyhow, he must act upon the hint. There was no alternative. So with fastidious attention to detail he made his toilet in duplicate of Paul Westveer, the millionaire clubman, when dining out.

Paul slightly limped because of a one-time accident at football that resulted in a bad knee. Stafford managed this by a thick inner sole in one shoe. Paul walked with head very erect. Stafford practiced the pose. He assumed the millionaire's stolid, unsmiling visage, his heavy-eyed gaze. He practiced Paul's trick of passing his left hand swiftly over that uprolled crown of shining hair. The pick-and-shovel pin gleamed in his shirt front. The signet ring and pick-and-shovel guard shone on his left hand. From the hotel mirror there gazed back at him a stranger. If it were not the man he copied, it certainly was not the ex-car-tester. He regretted the beard. Events had crowded him. Instead of having months or a year to prepare, action had been condensed into days.

At the correct dinner hour he arrived at the Imperial and alighted from a taxi where other vehicles waited at the brilliantly lighted entrance. He dismissed his car and entered the famous restaurant in exact imitation of what he had learned was Westveer's slow-paced, dignified manner. As he caught sight of Adora and her startled companion, his ringed hand nervously swept back his upcombed yellow hair with a swift, characteristic gesture. The room was lighted only by crimson-shaded candelabra on the dining tables. The effect was enchanting. Only those seated had their faces fully illumined by a rosy glow. Therefore the spurious Westveer walked with his face in shadow. His eyes were upon Adora, who was ravishingly beautiful in a costume of white and blue silk with a blue plumed hat. Her piquant face was turned sidewise with big eyes looking toward him and unsmiling lips as in her portrait. But she gave him no hint or sign of what she expected him to do. As he appeared to hesitate about a table, he saw that the man he knew to be Seydel was staring toward him with dilated pupils. His color was paste. He seemed to wilt perceptibly like foliage under fire. As Stafford neared them Adora spoke.

"Speak of the devil," said she, "and you straightway see him ordering dinner. How do you do, Paul? Seems everybody focuses at the big city."

Before Stafford could step up to take her hand and receive a hoped-for hint, Seydel practically bolted, and the girl kept close to his side. By a swift move Stafford reached the vestibule and his hat by a second door. When he emerged on the street only Adora was in sight. Her conscience-smitten companion was settling his unpaid bill in conference with a pursuing waiter. There was a moment to spare, but to Stafford's amazement the girl merely caught his eye and pointed out a closed cab. Instantly she entered the one just ahead and was rapidly driven away. What was her plan? At least she had adroitly handed the enemy into his keeping. And that waiting cab was the beginning. He stepped into its unlighted interior. Then he thought of her greeting. "Seems everybody focuses at the big city." Did she include Wisconsin police? What a farce! Next moment the move arranged by Adora took place. Seydel, having paid the waiter, crossed the street and sprang into the cab with his enemy. The door [illegible]

"I'm deuced nervous tonight," he began, then street lights poured into the cab at a crossing. Seydel caught a view of the man from whom he shrank in an ecstasy of unreasoning terror. He nearly swooned. He was in a panic of fright. At that moment Westveer's avenger might have ended the forfeited life. But Stafford discovered he had no desire to kill. No sportsman cares to slay a cowering, helpless brute. At the climax of his affair he was utterly without an idea as to his next act. The terrified wretch, imprisoned with him, was beating against the cab door in a frenzied desire to escape. Stafford's left hand, the hand with Westveer's rings, shot out and gripped Seydel's right wrist. For minutes this silent battle raged. The accuser hung to his prey, intending to voice his charge of murder. The other dumbly fought in maniacal terror. In the driver's seat a bribed chauffeur headed for the nearest depot. Back of them drove a shadowing car containing triumphant police, who had spotted Westveer at the restaurant door. They knew nothing of Seydel and cared less. Ahead of them rode an escaped millionaire murderer whose head netted an enormous reward.

As they neared the railroad tracks the guilty man in Stafford's grasp became brave with insane terror, and succeeded in flinging himself thru the door with that steel-like grip drawing his accuser after him. Both fell sprawling. Then with the strength of demons, Seydel bounded to his feet and fled along the iron-ribbed yards, with Stafford still clinging to his wrist. As he raced thus encumbered, his insane fright gave birth to an awful purpose. In the near distance came the glare of a locomotive's onsweeping light. Toward this he dashed as a fleeing convict might drag an impeding ball and chain. Stafford knew his terrible purpose and braced to hold him. Impossible. The monster searchlight cleft the night, the hurtling engine shrieked warning, brakes ground tons of metal to a stop, but too late. Stafford jerked the lunatic backward, but his extended limbs were severed at the knee.

Two motors dashed to the spot. From one alighted Adora McKee Seydel, from the other two officers in plain clothes who had followed Paul Westveer.

"Gentlemen," said Adora, addressing them, "the man you want is there by the cannon-ball express. He has just saved the life of the one your law says he murdered."

CHAPTER IX.

BLOODLETTING was an ancient cure for many ailments, including madness. Results may have justified its practice. At any rate, the severing of Seydel's limbs and the consequent hemorrhage cooled his brain and restored his senses. By his side in the hospital sat Adora, his wife, every moment permitted her by rigid rules of the institution. And this devoted Adora was altogether adorable. For the rapidly waning life she felt nothing but compassion. Her intent to confront him with a lifelike replica of his wronged cousin had driven him to his death. Her brain approved this merited punishment, an altogether correct meting out of absolute justice. Conscience drove him mad; and while mad the gods destroyed him. But her heart pitied him. She listened to his penitent and full confession without letting him know the depths of his infamy.

"I'm glad that Paul lives," he de-

Like A Boy at 50 Bubbling Over

With Vitality—Taking Iron Did It

Doctor says Nuxated Iron is greatest of all strength builders—Often increases the strength and endurance of delicate, nervous folks 200 per cent. in two weeks time.

NOT long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact a young man he really was notwithstanding his age. The secret he said was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health at 46 careworn and nearly all [illegible] Now at 50 a miracle of vitality and [illegible] face beaming with the buoyancy of [illegible]uth. As I have said a hundred times [illegible] iron is the greatest of all strength [illegible]ilders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take simple nuxated [illegible] I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die [illegible] year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart trouble, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood. Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood [illegible] change food into living tissue. Without [illegible], no matter h[illegible] our food merel[illegible] [illegible] get the [illegible]ngth out of [illegible] [illegible]me weak, pale an[illegible] plant trying to [illegible] deficient in iron. If you [illegible] well you owe it [illegible] [illegible]lowing [illegible] how [illegible] [illegible] tired [illegible]

[illegible] I have seen dozens of nervous, [illegible]own people who were ailing all the while, double their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days time [illegible]king iron in the proper form [illegible]fter they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete or prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray, while [illegible]nother has gone down to inglorious [illegible]efeat simply for the lack of iron. [illegible] Sauer, M. D.

[illegible]

YOU CAN GROW YOUR HAIR

BEFORE
[illegible]TH WEEK
6TH WEEK

Successful Scientific Treatment FREE OF CHARGE

Do you suffer from loss of hair? Does your hair get prematurely gray? Is your hair stringy, sticky or matted? Do you suffer from dandruff, itching or eczema of the scalp [illegible] bald headed or about to become so? [illegible] of the above mentioned [illegible] try to relieve the trouble [illegible] Write at once for our

"The Triumph of Science Over Baldness."

FREE TREATMENT

[illegible]

UNION LABORATORY, BOX [illegible] UNION, N. Y.

[illegible]

clared over and over. "That is my one comfort—except you."

So she permitted him to keep both. She was no longer his judge. Beside Paul wished his slayer to die believing he yet existed. So she remained at his side and offered nothing but compassion. His few relatives came, were presented to Adora, and promptly retreated. Norton had nothing to leave them but a wife. When he finally passed away it was Adóra and her father who attended the interment

At his hotel Stafford had packed his belongings, claimed his car, and set out for his home State. This trip he had nothing to fear except arrest for cashing Westveer's one check and living six days in the millionaire's home as an impostor. Let them arrest! He was tired of furtive living. A half-month of it inspired him with a desire to air the whole affair. His nature was direct, and he'd welcome the law's probe if it relieved him from several unwholesome secrets. Except one. No one must know, including Adora, that he'd fallen madly in love with her. He, a nonentity, a poverty-stricken car-tester, dared to care for a woman as much above him as the stars. Moreover she was heiress to the Westveer estate. Seydel, little dreaming of the amount involved, had insisted upon bequeathing to his beloved wife his entire possessions. She was forced to permit him this last satisfaction, and it made her the richest woman in the State. Stafford determined to dismiss her from his mind

At Zolla and Gates' sales garage he interviewed Jewett and asked to have his job back

"It's yours," said the manager, "and a model waiting. That new car-buster don't know any more about cars than he does of comets. Get busy."

So Stafford resumed his meteoric driving on quiet highways; and each evening as he parked the tested motor in Zolla and Gates' salesrooms he looked for arrest—and was unmolested. It amazed him. Was it possible to tamper with a bank account belonging to another and go scot free? The long, low runabout which he stored at the garage was proof of his unlawful receipts. Mentally he believed himself entitled to the amount as just payment for carrying out Westveer's wishes. Men of law would view the matter differently.

But, as it happened, they were viewing the affair exactly as Mrs. Adora Seydel instructed them after she spread beneath their keen scrutiny the papers that secured her rights to the Westveer estates, together with Seydel's signed confession and Westveer's last will and testament. This document she secured from Stafford as a souvenir after he declared his intention of never using it. For this reason the tryer-out of motors came and went undisturbed, and finally Adora returned to the country residence with her father and sent for him.

"I want you to tell me over again everything Paul said," she declared. "Nothing must be overlooked. His wishes about the servants and the two places and ——"

She was divinely eager to do right. There were many details she wished to consult him about. Sometimes they adjourned the discussions until after a spin in the road-devouring roadster. The girl was as speed mad as he, and the two dropped into the habit of driving evenings and holidays. He knew every hour in her presence made his lot harder to bear, made renunciation more difficult. He resolved to remove himself from temptation. But enchanted weeks slipped by and ultimately brought him an astounding legal report on legal forms, signed by a famous city law firm. The stilted phraseology told him that the will Westveer wrote in his favor was accepted by the courts. He was, undoubtedly, the millionaire's chosen heir.

This was the doings of Adora. He understood, but he would never accept. He wrote and told her so. In return he received a tiny note written on paper with her monogram.

"No," she wrote, "the estate is not mine. Surely you know I'd starve rather than touch a penny of it. It's yours by every moral and legal right. You dare not refuse the gift. It was a sacred trust, and that sacred trust included—me."

The End

* * *

Realism.

"Do you believe in realism in the theater?"

"Yes," replied the manager. "I don't care for it so much on the stage, but getting real money in the box office is a great trick if you can do it."

THE REASON.

[illegible]
[illegible] life would not [illegible]
[illegible] hinted [illegible]
That if he said the word sh[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] still [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] wondered why he didn't speak
W[illegible] they together went out walking
[illegible] ry was "twelve a week,"
[illegible] no lover does much talking

* * *

THE DECIDING FACTOR.

"I ran out to Ethel's this morning and found them busy packing furniture," said Masterly to his wife. "You know they're going to move. The baby was sitting on the floor, in all the confusion and fuss—and was grinning like a young hyena. She seemed to enjoy it immensely. But Ethel was tired out, and I thought I'd like to bring the baby back here until they're all settled."

Masterly paused. Before he could continue, Mrs Masterly began to talk explosively.

"Well, of all colossal nerve! It's very nice of you to be so kind and generous, when you pass all your time at the office and would see the baby about ten minutes a day! I'd like to know whom you invited to take care of her! It's all very well for you to think it would be so pleasant for Ethel, but who's thinking of me?

"It means getting up at night at all hours, to see that she's warm and well—and it means being tied here in the house for days, unless I dress up the baby and take her with me! It means washing and ironing, for she's always playing with messy things, and I can't bear untidy children around me. And I never can be half dressed up, looking after her all the time! Babies soil your clothes so dreadfully!

"But, of course, all this makes no difference to you, so long as you can relieve Ethel and escape all trouble yourself!

"I can see how you like to make such offers," Mrs. Masterly ran on. "It gives you a name for being kind and considerate—but I notice you don't say that you'll take the baby down to the office with you! No, indeed! You just said: 'I'll take her home, Ethel, and Mrs. Masterly can care for her!' I wonder what you'd do if I wasn't here to pay the penalty of your generosity!

"Why can't Ethel keep her own baby? You must think she has to do the packing and lifting of all the furniture herself. Why, there's nothing for her to do except watch the men, and I'm sure the baby wouldn't prevent that! And if the baby was enjoying it as much as you say she was, what on earth do you want to interrupt her pleasure for? We haven't any toys here for the baby, and I'm blest if I want a wagonload of toys brought over here for her to play with! I never saw such a littered up house as Ethel's, even when she isn't moving!

"Ethel knows that I'm not at all strong, and that I'm terribly nervous! I don't see what she was thinking of to listen to you! I regarded her as more considerate. Why, that baby's crying will simply drive me frantic! How could you get me into such a fix? Oh, what ever shall I do? I'm so tired already with the housecleaning, and all!"

Mrs. Masterly sat down despondently, and with moist eyes cast a reproachful glance at her husband

"Well, don't worry about it!" said Masterly. "Ethel told me that you'd be too tired to look after the baby, and when I asked the baby about it she was most emphatic in her refusal. She frowningly declared that she wouldn't come!"

Mrs. Masterly sat up straight. "She said she wouldn't come?" She leaned forward excitedly. "That baby said she wouldn't come? John Masterly, can Ethel's baby talk?"

"Well, she said: 'No your house! Me tay here!' if you call that talking," returned Masterly, grinning.

Mrs. Masterly got up energetically. "The idea!" she exclaimed. "And she said she didn't want to come here and stay with us! The little villain! I'll show her! I've ordered a doll for her birthday, and I'll just go right over and get it now, and that'll coax her to come! The idea! She's forgotten all the candy and fruit we gave her when she was here. I suppose—and she's excited about the moving But just you wait; I know how to coax her!"

Mrs. Masterly smiled a competent, self-congratulatory smile, as she pinned on her hat "I'll start out with you now," she said "Ethel will be glad to be rid of her; the little monkey! Well we'll see!"

* * *

Looks.

"I wish Udelia wouldn't take up with such queer-looking friends," moaned Mrs Fuddles. "Gracious! Every once in a while she brings a new friend home and each one of them is worse than the one before

"Such queer-looking girls! I don't like their looks. I don't like their voices. And this last one is terrible! She has a voice like a croaking frog and a strange look out of the eyes. I do wish Udelia would make better selections in her choice of companion

"But you can't tell much about people by their looks," said Fuddles. "You have to try them out before you can tell. That's what Udelia does—she proceeds to try them out.

"For my part, I have never been able to tell anything about people by their looks. Now, there's Buskirk. When he first came along with that patent process of his I wanted to know mighty bad what kind of a fellow he was and how much I could stake on him But there was no way of knowing

"He had eyes that said as plain as could be: 'I am a regular boob I wouldn't come in if it were raining cats and dogs. I would talk war to a stranger with a protruding chin and loan a lawyer my watch and chain.'

"But the nose was altogether different. The nose said: 'You couldn't put anything over on me and you couldn't keep me off your premises with a bull dog. I put my foot in the door and there it stays. You can't shut the door in my face and keep me out. And I'll stay until you carry me out feet first.'

"Then the mouth said: 'I am innocent, childlike and bland. I am liable to get lost on my way to Sunday school.'

"Then the chin butted in and said 'I'm a devil in my own home town.'

"So how in the world can you decide a person's makeup if you judge him according to his looks?

"A dog never chooses his friends by their looks There's that little Noodles across the street Does he choose decent-looking dogs for [illegible] His best friend is the sneaking[illegible] ugly you ever saw in your life.

"Even cats are unintelligible in their tastes. That Tiger of the Bontragers has killed hundreds of cats because he didn't like their looks, fuzzy little white kittens, purry little tortoise shells, cats that looked like picture cards, black and white and solid colors, cats that you and I thought cute and lovable.

"And what kind of a cat did he finally take up with? A poke-necked, miscellaneous-colored, ornery old creature who was peeling off in spots, sore-eyed, limpy, a mean-looking misfit, with a whine more repulsive than his looks. You and I, judging from that cat's exterior, can never know the beautiful personality that Tiger discovered underneath that unpromising outside'

* * *

Queer Garb.

"John," said Mrs. McFobb, "I hope you will not get yourself up in your usual Sunday garb this time. Why you should think it necessary for the observance of the Sabbath to array yourself in that old blue negligee shirt and that draggled old pair of trousers is more than I can comprehend

"Well," answered [illegible] get the hang of those dressing [illegible] that's why. They may be all right for some men, but I feel comfortable in a negligee shirt and loose trousers That [illegible] the way I relax on [illegible]. A hifalutin dressing gown with a fancy rope around the waist and a lot of cute tassels may be all right for [illegible] fellows, but it doesn't suit me"

"My husband is like that," said Mrs Nibbins Mrs. McFobb's sister He has an old Prince Albert coat, once black but now green, the oldest and greenest coat you ever saw. Every [illegible] morning he deems it his duty to [illegible] old coat. I think he is trying to see how long he can wear it I've been endeavoring to get hold of the [illegible] thing for years Where he keep[illegible] ing the week is a mystery [illegible] who is visiting at the house, he appears in that coat. I can see that the visitors think it queer."

"That ought to make them happy," observed McFobb

"Besides," continued Mrs [illegible] he goes to the street corner to mail a letter on Sunday, do you suppose he wears an ordinary hat, such as he [illegible] to work? No, indeed! It is Sunday So he fishes out an old derby that [illegible] tles down to his ears and then he goes to the letter box looking like a variety show. He certainly is more or less of an exhibition

"I like to make the neighbors happy myself," said McFobb [illegible] aren't the only ones to provide [illegible] for the neighbors by what you w[illegible]

Resinol Soap

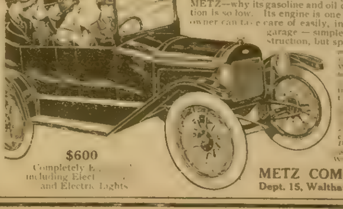
a friend to tender skins

Any soap will clean your skin—a bar of laundry soap will do if you do not care what becomes of your complexion. But you know [illegible] laundry soap contains harsh, dry[illegible] alkali that would ruin your skin an[illegible] hair, so you never think of using it for your toilet.

Many ill-made toilet soaps contain this same injurious alkali. Resinol Soap contains absolutely no free alkali, and to it is added the soothing, healing Resinol medication, which doctors have used for over 20 years in treating skin troubles. Thus it comforts tender skins, and helps nature clear the complexion and keep the hair rich, lustrous and free from dandruff. Sold by all druggists.

A METZ Hugs the Road
As No Other Light Car Does

Its roomy tonneau, long wheel base, springs and shock absorbers give you heavy car ease and comfort, at light car expense Its gearless transmission is strong, sure, gives you a speed for any road c[illegible] and makes jerking, when starting [illegible] speeds, impossible. Combine th[illegible] light weight—and you have th[illegible] reason why tires last longer on a METZ—why its gasoline and oil consumption is so low. Its engine is one that any owner can take care of easily, in his own garage — simple in construction, but speedy and



[illegible] ing this car, the present [illegible] of the [illegible] chance for Dealers [illegible]

$600
Completely E[illegible]
including Elect[illegible]
and Electric Lights

METZ COMPANY
Dept. 15, Waltham, Mass.

The Jewels of Jezebel.

(Continued From Page 7)

to the table and placed the casket there- [illegible] Nevermore would she be robbed [illegible] treasure. It was hers at last. The [illegible] she bore the trophy away [illegible]

She had barely gained her private chamber when the door opened and a golden-haired page presented his face. Queen Isabel scowled.

"What now that you intrude?" she exclaimed wrathfully. "Cannot the Queen of France have a moment of her [illegible]"

[illegible] and took a folded paper from [illegible]

"This for the Queen," said he in an apologetic voice. "Will she read it immediately?"

Isabel turned from the casket and took the message from the youth's hand. Breaking the seal she bent over the table to read the writing.

All at once a cry broke the stillness of the chamber, and Isabel stood erect glaring at the page with flame-shot eyes. She was shaking from head to foot.

"I got it from a man on the street," said the boy. "He thrust it into my hands, saying: 'For the Queen and at once,' and I bounded away without so much as looking at the fellow."

The Queen read the message [illegible], and the words seemed to trace a line of fire across her brain as well they might, for she had read as follows:

Classified Want Ads

Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500 N. Dearborn St. CHICAGO, ILL.

SALESMEN WANTED

$[illegible].50 PER WEEK AND EXPENSES TO [illegible] ing agents for us; send [illegible] Shelby, N. C.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS—HERE'S WHAT THEY ALL want. Concentrated Beer Extract for making Beer at Home; strictly legitimate. Enormous demand. make $6 to $12 a day easy. Just a post. Offer. The Ambrew Co., [illegible] cinnati, Ohio.

BIG PAY AND AUTOMOBILE FURNISHED [illegible] ples of new necessity with automobile owners whole or part time. No selling, collecting, delivering. Our new plan does all. Orolo Manufacturing Company, Louisville, Ky.

YOU'RE WANTED TO MAKE BIG MONEY controlling exclusive territory selling new patented kerosene lamp burner and wick feeder. Doubles light. Everyone buys. Plans free. International Mfg. Co., Dept. 538, Toledo, Ohio.

SUIT $3.75, PANTS $1.00, MADE TO measure. For even a better offer than this write and ask for free samples and styles. Knickerbocker Tailoring Co., Dept. 414, Chicago, Ill.

I WANT ACTIVE, INTELLIGENT REPRESENTATIVE for highgrade financial enterprise in your locality. Experience not essential. References furnished. Good pay to right party. Beaton, 9 Pine Street, New York.

LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS REPRESENTATIVES to sell shirts, underwear, hosiery, dresses, waists, skirts, direct to homes. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 586 Broadway, New York City.

SELL CROWE'S NATIVE HERB TABLETS and establish permanent business. World's best family remedy. Sample and particulars free. Crowe Medicine Co., Detroit, Mich.

WRITE FOR SAMPLE HOLLADAY'S NEW waterproof shoe polish, all colors. Retails 10c. and 25c. 100% profit. Quick sales. Holladay, 258 W. 30th., N. Y.

AGENTS—I'VE A NEW SOAP GAME THAT'S [illegible] New stuff; 100% profits. Sample and full layout free. Write quick. Lacassian Co., Dept. 21, St. Louis, Mo.

$10.00 PER 1,000 ALLOWED DISTRIBUTING free Soap Samples. Pocket Soap Co., Lebanon, N. H.

AGENTS, 50%. QUICK SELLER. WRITE TO A. C. Robinson, Ozona, Florida.

FEMALE AGENTS WANTED

LADY AGENTS: I HAVE PLEASANT, profitable and legitimate work for one girl or woman canvasser in each territory; either all or spare time. Money and experience unnecessary. My agents are actually earning $12.00 to $35.00 per week. If you mean business I will start you at my own expense. A. M. Young, 100 Young's Bldg., Kalamazoo, Mich.

HELP WANTED

WANTED—BRANCH MANAGERS FOR Mail Order Business at your own home selling new and popular household novelties. No canvassing. Mail or hand the catalogues we send you and make $3 to $50. One young married couple made over $310 in two months. You can do the same. We furnish everything. If you have a few hours each day and would like to make money write us, enclosing a self addressed stamped envelope for particulars. Irvin & Graham, 1161 Broadway, New York.

$20 TO $35 PER MONTH EXTRA MONEY to any employed person without interfering with regular work. No selling, no canvassing. Positively no investment. Unemployed need not apply. Address The Silver Mirror Co., Inc., 119 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

WILL ADVANCE EXPENSES AND PAY straight weekly salary of $18.00 to man or woman with fair education and good references. No canvassing. Staple line. Old-established firm. G. M. Nichols, Philadelphia, Pa., Pepper Bldg.

MEN AND WOMEN OVER 18—WANTED. $150 month. [illegible]

FREE TUITION—WRITE QUICK. HOME- [illegible] bookkeeping. [illegible] expense. Southern Correspondence Institute, New Orleans.

MEN—BECOME CHAUFFEURS; $18.00 week while earning. Sample lessons free. [illegible] Institute, Dept. K-81[illegible] Rochester, [illegible]

BE DETECTIVE; OPERATE OWN LOCALITY or travel; experience unnecessary. Norton Detective Agency, [illegible] Norton [illegible]

MALE HELP WANTED

GOVERNMENT RAILWAY MAIL, POST OFFICE, rural carrier "exams" everywhere soon. Get prepared by former Government civil service examiner. Booklet free. Arthur Robert Patterson, Rochester, N. Y.

MOTORMEN—CONDUCTORS, $80 MONTH- [illegible] let free. [illegible] St. Louis, Mo.

RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS WANTED. COM- [illegible] month. Sample exa [illegible] Franklin Institute, Dep't. K 170, [illegible] N. Y.

GOVERNMENT EXAMINATIONS—THOROUGH instruction, $5. Returned if not appointed. Particulars free. American Civil Service School, Washington, D. C.

SILVERING MIRRORS; "NEW SYSTEM" investigate my way first—no cap. [illegible] Wallace Abell, Monroe, Wis.

MALE HELP—(Continued)

FIREMEN AND BRAKEMEN: $100 MONTHLY. Experience unnecessary; hundreds [illegible] by the best railroads everywhere. [illegible] 686 Railway Bureau, East St. [illegible]

DO YOU WANT A SURE JOB WITH BIG [illegible] hours, and rapid advance? Write [illegible] Free Book DW 1034, which tells [illegible] good government pos- [illegible] Washington, D. C.

HUSTLERS—$20 TO $30 MADE WEEKLY [illegible] signs etc. [illegible] National Agency, Dept. B10, Chicago.

I WILL START YOU EARNING $4 DAILY at home, silvering mirrors; free instructive booklet. G. F. Redmond, Dept. 400, Boston, Mass.

BE A DETECTIVE. EARN FROM $150.00 to $300.00 per month; travel over the world. Write C. T. Ludwig, 320 Westover Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

BE A DETECTIVE; EARN $50-$100 WEEKLY; travel over the world. Experience unnecessary. American Foreign Detective Institute, 115 Chemical, St. Louis.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

LARGE MANUFACTURER WILL ESTABLISH active lady of good address and ability in permanent, profitable business in her home town, $50.00 to $100.00 per month, experience unnecessary; all or spare time; occupation congenial to woman of refinement. For particulars address B. Parker Mills, 2737 No. 12th St., Phila., Pa.

A RARE OPPORTUNITY, MAKE COMFORTABLE living home sewing plain cloth seams, any sewing machine. Steady. No canvassing. No triflers reply. Send 10c for samples, etc. Returned if not satisfactory. Home Sewers Co., Jobbers Sewing, B. L. F., Rehoboth, Del.

FIVE BRIGHT, CAPABLE LADIES TO travel, demonstrate and sell dealers. $25 [illegible] per week. Railroad fare paid. Goodrich Drug Company, Dept. 85, Omaha, Neb.

WOMEN TO SEW; MATERIAL PREPAID [illegible] plain sewing. No canvassing. Send stamped envelope for prices paid. Universal Co., Dept. 54, Phila., Pa.

LADIES, STEADY SEWING, CUT MATERIAL furnished, prepaid. No canvassing. Addressed stamped envelope for particulars. A. & O. Supply Co., Ashland, Wis.

WANTED—APRON MAKERS. SEND FIFTEEN cents. Returned if dissatisfied. K[illegible] 4706 Ellis Ave., Chicago.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS OPEN TO [illegible] free list. Franklin [illegible] Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—DUST CAPS MADE. SEND 20c; returned if dissatisfied. Household Garment Company, 4704 Ellis Ave., Chicago.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

INVEST $10. MAY MAKE A FORTUNE. Others have, why not you? Co-operative oil enterprise; get interested with us in valuable leases [illegible] to be drilled in proven oil field [illegible] lons; very easy monthly [illegible] Write for literature and maps. Great Southern Oil Association, 900 Carter Bldg., Houston, Texas.

OIL. $10.00 INVESTED WITH US HAS made others $300 in less than six months. Let us send you our magazine "Profitable Investments," six months free, which tells how [illegible] make your money make you independent. [illegible] Hoffman Company, 407 Fannin Street, [illegible] Texas.

$15.00 INVESTED MAY MAKE $1,000 yearly. Gets warranty deed, also interest [illegible] rative oil well we're getting ready to [illegible] big gusher oil territory. $1 cash. $1 [illegible] 4 lots short time, $56. Particulars [illegible] Triangle Oil Co., 407 Carter Bldg., Houston, Texas.

EVERY READER OF THE LEDGER OUGHT to read these ads. Every week splendid chances to make money—to better yourself—[illegible] exchange goods or services, [illegible] offered here.

FOR THE HOME

NEW STYLE EGG BEATER SEPARATES yolks from white. Also whips cream. [illegible] Box 539, Galesburg, Ill.

FARMS FOR SALE

POOR MAN'S CHANCE—$5.00 MONTHLY [illegible] productive land, sunny South [illegible] $200.00. Box 425-S, Car- [illegible]

SHORT STORIES WANTED

WRITERS!—STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, B6, Hannibal, Mo.

MOVING PICTURE BUSINESS

$35.00 PROFIT NIGHTLY, SMALL CAPITAL starts you. No experience needed. We teach you the Business. Catalog free. Atlas Moving Picture Company, Franklin Building, Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS. $100 EACH. CORRESPONDENCE course unnecessary. Write for free booklet "How to Write Photoplays." Universal Publishing Company, 105, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

OLD COINS WANTED

WILL PAY $3.00 TO $10.00 FOR FLYING Eagle cent dated 1856. We pay cash premiums on all rare dimes, quarters, etc., and all rare coins to 1912. Thousands of coins and bills wanted. Send 4c for our Large Illustrated Coin Circular. May mean large profits to you. Numismatic Bank, Dept. 12, Fort Worth, Texas.

FARMS WANTED

WANTED—FARMS—HAVE 3,357 BUYERS; describe your unsold property. 746 Farmers' Exchange, Denver, Colo.

MOTORCYCLES

REBUILT MOTORCYCLES, ALL MAKES, like new, $25 to $200.00. Every machine guaranteed. New bicycles and motor supplies direct to you at factory prices. Write today for big free catalog and latest bargain price list. Western Supplies Co., 81 Larimer St., Denver, Colorado.

FARM LANDS

PROFITABLE LITTLE FARMS IN VALLEY of Virginia, 5 and 10 acre tracts, $250 and up, easy terms—good fruit, vegetable, poultry and live stock country. Send for literature now. F. H. LaBaume, Agrl. Agt., N. & W. Ry., 248 Arcade Bldg., Roanoke, Va.

GOOD LANDS; WEST. MICH., $10 TO $20 per acre, small first payment; long easy terms; free book and map. Swigart Land Co., X1249 First National Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

LANDS FOR SALE

BEAUTIFUL SEASHORE HOMESITES only $20. Special sale lots at Alamo Beach, Texas, famous Bayshore resort. First 100 lots $20. Terms $1 cash, $1 monthly. Lots 50x140 feet. Splendid investment. Write for free literature and views. Alamo Beach Co., 421 First National Bank, Houston, Texas.

HONEY

BEST QUALITY NEW CLOVER HONEY. 30 lb. can $3.45; two or more cans $3.30 each. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Sample 10 cts. Price list free. M. V. Facey, Preston, Minn.

INSECTS WANTED

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WANTED AT ONCE—NAME AND ADDRESS of single man who would marry refined, honorable, handsome lady having considerable wealth, who might assist her husband financially. For more complete particulars, which will bring you one of the largest collections of photos and descriptions of handsome, refined and wealthy ladies, both maidens and widows, between the ages of 18 to 60, who claim to be worth all the way from $1,000 to $25,000 and upwards, write me at once. Address Allen Ward, B 520, Valley, Nebr.

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25 BEAUTIFUL POSES CALIFORNIA bathing girls, 10c. 100, 25c. Enterprise Co., Y-3248 Lowe Ave., Chicago.

"My Dearest Sister I am hurt maybe to the death. It was by the rapier of a crazy man. For the sake of the good God send for me at the little black house in the Rue des Anges near the fountain. I may live to serve you if you come at once.

"Your brother,
"ORLEANS"

The Queen's face lost every vestige of color. The paper fell from her shaking hands to the table, and seemed to stare at her from every letter.

"Merciful Heaven!" the boy heard her cry. "Wounded and maybe to the death! Spitted by a madman's rapier? I will find him. I will call him back to life for future vengeance. It will bring him joy to know that I have the jewels at last."

The page was told to go and to keep the purport of his coming one of the secrets of his life, and he went without a word. When the door had closed upon him Isabel hid the jewels of Jezebel in her private desk and changed her dress

Orleans desperately wounded, wounded in the little black house in the Rue des Anges? How had he happened there? Why had he not been taken to his hostel? Then those three days of mystery would not have rasped her heart

She set off at once in the royal carriage, for in her excitement she did not think of the people who would wonder why she was out near the break of dawn. The horses rushed like wildfire thru the almost deserted streets, and drew up at last before a small house, old-fashioned and one of the relics of early Paris.

Isabel alighted without assistance and said something in low tones to her Jehu The man nodded assent. Up the steps she went and without ceremony into the house itself.

"Who comes?" asked a voice, the owner of which she did not see.

"Never mind who comes!" answered Isabel. "I want to see the wounded man."

"He is gone, madam."

Isabel gave utterance to a curse.

"No lies for me!" she exclaimed, and then guessing from whence the voice had come, she flung herself forward and fell upon a human being

Even in the darkness the Queen's hands seemed to have eyes, for they found a throat, and she clutched it in her raving madness.

"No lies, I say!" she hissed. "Where is Louis of Orleans?"

"He is gone, I say. If you come I will show you his empty cot."

"Be quick about it," shouted the Queen.

Clutching the wrist of the other, Isabel went down a narrow hallway and was dragged into a room lighted by a guarded lamp which revealed its surroundings. An empty cot stood in one corner.

"Look for yourself," said her guide. "You see his cot is empty. My God! 'tis the Queen"

"Certainly I am the Queen," responded Isabel. "When did he go?"

"Within the last hour, tho he was very weak. He was badly cut——"

"By whom?" The Queen stood before the woman with clinched hands and a face of speechless pain.

"He would not tell us. He was brought here by three men who paid me gold enough for his keep. They took the coin from his pockets and then brought the surgeon, M. Georges. That is all I know, your majesty."

Isabel turned to the door. She threw a purse at the woman's feet, and in another moment was out in the street and in her carriage

"To the palace!" she cried, and the vehicle seemed a dark ball as it rolled down the street

Panting and white, she reached her chamber.

"I thought he would have waited for me," she began, trembling in disappointed passion. "He must have quitted the old house in a fit of forgetfulness. Rapiered! The Prince of Orleans? I'll comb this city of sin but what I find him!"

Then she thought of the jewels of Jezebel

"I'll have a look at the treasure," she exclaimed. "Once more I will feast my eyes on the gems of Ahab's wicked queen. Fortune guided me to them tonight and——"

She had opened the desk and was staring at the casket which she had recently placed there For some moments she held it up to the light and admired its carvings There was nothing like it in the world.

Underneath the box was a hidden spring which Queen Isabel hastened to touch. Her finger eagerly found it; there was a quick pressure and the lid flew open.

"Mine! Mine!" cried the Queen of France. "Nevermore shall they part us The jewels of Jezebel are mine forever——"

The casket fell from her hands to the table, and she recoiled with a piercing shriek as her eyes seemed to distend

"Whose work is this? Who put that horrible thing in the box? Who? Who"

Over the white lid of the jewel casket a strange thing had thrust itself, a thing that had life, but eyes of death and a forked tongue. The color of its scales was a greenish gray, and Isabel knew that one of the deadliest members of the reptile tribe had usurped the place of the jewels of Jezebel.

This capital story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful!" breathed Mrs Jibbetts, ecstatically

"Huh?" inquired Jibbetts.

"Why," explained his wife, coming down to earth and laying aside her magazine, "if I had the northeast corner of the back yard divided off by wire fencing—and there is that piano box in the basement that would be just the thing—and Johnny could help——"

"Are you crazy?" demanded Jibbetts, in genuine alarm.

"Why, I'm talking about chickens," said Mrs. Jibbetts "If I had six good, healthy hens, we would have all the fresh eggs we wanted all summer and then in the fall we could eat them."

"Why not buy cold storage eggs in the first place?" asked Jibbetts sarcastically. "Why save them up till fall?"

"I mean eat the chickens," said Mrs Jibbetts, engrossed with her idea. "Wouldn't it be lovely? Could you move up the piano box——"

"Lillian," said Jibbetts, "you might as well forget it! Chickens in the back yard! Perfectly ridiculous! I [illegible]rd of such a thing—in this neighborhood, too"

"What if you didn't?" demanded Mrs. Jibbetts, hotly. "I should think you'd be glad to have me cut the cost of living instead of raising a fuss about it! And about such a small thing as six chickens——"

"Six jumping Jehoshaphats!" said Jibbets. "You must want to work the neighbors up to the point where they'll form a Ku Klux clan in self-defense! If we had six chickens we'd be the best hated individuals in the street! Nobody'd speak to us! They'd put poison in the milk bottles and throw bricks thru the windows and complain about us at the police station! Chickens? Nothing doing"

"I think," said Mrs. Jibbetts, her lips drawn in a straight line, "that you'll find I have something to say about [illegible] Harold! You talk as [illegible] up to you! I guess that if I fix the piano box and get them and take care of them, you'll eat the eggs all right! And if the neighbors don't like it they can move! We've been here longer than most of them! Anyhow, they won't be disturbed. I read somewhere that if you treated chickens kindly and fed them the right stuff they'd only cluck contentedly and not cackle. The[illegible]"

"I suppose so," [illegible] Jibbetts. "I suppose if you held a [illegible]horn chicken claw tenderly and fed it gumdrops while you addressed it as [illegible] sweetheart,' the creature would [illegible] or die on the spot with joy But you let some one else try the experiment. I hate experiments Somebody always gets blown up, and in this case I think it would be us Anyhow, you'd be wanting me to upholster the piano box in red plush and put in electric bells, so that if one of the chickens got lonesome after dark and wanted to be read to or have the victrola turned on it could arouse you! There wouldn't be any eggs. And if there were, the boys on the alley would steal them"

"You don't know anything about it!" [illegible]ed Mrs. Jibbett[illegible] they'll lay [illegible] but a [illegible] it would [illegible] eggs."

"[illegible] family [illegible] found at the grocery store," [illegible] Jibbetts "I won't [illegible] haven't any common [illegible] have to smuggle [illegible] the family."

"I will not [illegible] Mrs. [illegible] into her arms [illegible] and her workbasket [illegible] leave you to [illegible] chickens."

"Not much!"

"Why, you're a regular tyrant," [illegible] Mrs Jibbetts

"I'm not [illegible] so foolish," stormed Jibbetts, "as keeping chickens! Besides," he ended [illegible]ingly, "there isn't room to keep six [illegible] between [illegible] garage and the fence!"

"I know it," said Mrs. Jibbetts. "I thought of that just after I had said I had decided to have them!"

Her husband stared at her feebly.

"Well," he muttered, "if you did think of it, then why on earth have you been [illegible] all this row and getting mad at me and everything?"

"Well," said Mrs. Jibbetts, indignantly, "it was because if I had been where I could have had them you'd have acted just the same, and I wasn't going to stand for it!"

"Oh, gee!" gasped Mr. Jibbets as he mopped his brow. "You women are the limit!"

* * *

Pat Counted.

Dr. Wiley tells the following story: Sleepily, after a night off, a certain interne hastened to his hospital ward The [illegible] patient [illegible].

"How goes it?" he inquired

"Faith, it'sh me breathin', doctor. I can't get me breath at all, at all."

"Why, your pulse is normal. Let me examine the lung action," replied the doctor, kneeling beside the cot and laying his head on the ample chest.

"Now, let's hear you talk," he continued, closing his eyes and listening.

"What'll Oi be sayin', doctor?"

"Oh, say anything. Count one, two three, and up," murmured the interne, drowsily

"Wan, two, three, four, five, six," began the patient. When the young doctor, with a start, opened his eyes, Pat was counting huskily. "Tin hundred an' sixty-nine, tin hundred an' sivinty, tin hundred an' sivinty [illegible]"

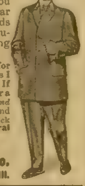
* * *

His Offer.

The mayoral chair of a Northern town [illegible] occupied by a man of great generosity. Among the applicants who sought relief from him during his tenure of office was a well-known local character known as "Talking Tim," who asked the loan of a few pounds to buy a donkey and cart and set up in the rag and bone b[illegible]

"Well, [illegible] you [illegible] pay m[illegible]

This was a [illegible] but [illegible]ed out [illegible] kind [illegible] I'll tell [illegible] the donkey [illegible]



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Home and Health

GENTLE JABS

Wise infants look before they creep

Most people who say but little talk too much

If you are in a hurry avoid the train of thought

Transgressors should be made to pay a road tax

Girls will be girls—if they can't be married women

Some men value outward show more than inward worth

It's easy for the average woman to keep a secret going

Envy is an acknowledgment of the good fortune of others

Some men are like doormats—useful chiefly to be walked over.

But the man who shines in society seldom shines in his business

Spend less time in apologizing and more in improving your conduct

Marriage isn't necessarily a failure, but it's seldom what it ought to be

You can soon fill your purse by adding a little more than you take out

However, a fool and his money are a combination you don't meet every day

Never argue with a man who is over 70 years of age, or with a woman of any age

Most people have lost more by crowding than they would by waiting their turn

A man without a collar button is almost as helpless as a woman without a hairpin

The downhearted married man should cheer up; the [illegible] are his wife isn't a mind reader

There's something wrong with the bride who doesn't elect a [illegible] girl than herself for a bridesmaid

An obese woman tries to console herself with the belief that she knows some other woman who is fatter than she is

"Blessed be the tie that binds not," would be an appropriate slogan for the Ohio woman who has been divorced seven times

When a fool hen takes a notion to sit she doesn't care a rap whether there are any eggs in the nest or not. Lazy men are built on the same plan.

A Western man has invented a preparation for restoring old paintings. A preparation for restoring new umbrellas to their owners would be more popular

MY MOTHER.

The twilight [illegible] on mother's life
The golden [illegible]
But [illegible]
[illegible] gather [illegible] are rife
[illegible]
Grow [illegible]
[illegible] trouble [illegible] mother

[illegible] I [illegible] at close of day
For as the dark comes down
[illegible] are the [illegible]
I fain would [illegible] away
I'd hide the [illegible] crown
Tho heaven [illegible]
No anxious thought has mother

Her graying locks were once so dark,
With ringlets prodigal,
[illegible] I was a child;
Her voice—the linnet and the lark
Sang in her younger call
And [illegible] beguiled
I've not forgotten O mother!

Dear God—hold back these twilight shades
Heaven's shining land is blessed
With angels fair;
If night descends, my earth-light fades,
No comfort lies in heart distressed;
If she were there
I'd be distraught for mother
—Charles L. H. Wagner.

FASHION NOTES.

Hats soar higher than ever

Picot-edged faille ribbons are in demand.

Sleeves of chiffon are found in the newest gowns

Many new evening dresses have short puff sleeves

The coats on the new suits flare softly below the hips.

Some of the new peplums on the jackets reach below the hips

The sleeveless nightgown is a new idea which is meeting with success.

Embroidered net, white and blue, makes a delightful lingerie dress.

Tiny artificial flowers of brilliant hue peep out from the stitched "make-believe" pockets on some of the new silk gowns

A blue taffeta gown is made more effective if a note of golden yellow is introduced on the collar, the girdle and pockets, by means of silk embroidery

White shoes of washable glazed kid are new. These are eleven inches high and laced, as are all the prettiest shoes They are to be worn with any color dress, either light or dark

The neck line of the spring and summer frock is much wider and therefore much more becoming than was last year's. That is, the frock is cut away at the sides of the throat as well as in front, showing something of the shoulder line

HEALTH NOTES.

As it is necessary in almost all cases to ventilate the sick room thoroly at least once a day, an open umbrella placed in front of the patient will protect him while the windows are open

If the hair is inclined to be dry it should have a little oil rubbed on the scalp once or twice a week. Massage will loosen the scalp and increase the circulation, and the nourishment of the hair is dependent upon the blood supply

Be sure that every bit of powder and rouge is removed before you retire at night. Take it off with cold cream first and then wash your face well with soap and water. But it is much better to trust to nature instead of to art for your complexion

At night, before retiring, when the hands have been well washed and dried, rub in a fair quantity of a good cold cream or camphorated ice. Then powder them lightly with a fine talcum and slip on loose old gloves reserved for this purpose. This will whiten the hands and keep them soft and smooth

RECIPES.

COCOANUT COOKIES.—One cup of grated cocoanut, one and one-half cups sugar, three-fourths cup of butter, one-half cup milk, two eggs, one large teaspoon baking powder, one-half teaspoon extract of vanilla, and flour enough to roll out

EGG CROQUETTES. Boil eight eggs until hard, remove the shells, chop the eggs fine and season with salt and white pepper to taste Place in a double boiler one tablespoonful of butter, and when it melts add one tablespoonful of flour, blend together, and when it foams add one-half cup of cream or good milk, and stir until good and thick. Allow to simmer about five minutes, then add the well-beaten yolk of one egg. Season with a little salt and pepper, and then pour over the chopped eggs. When cool form into croquettes in egg-shape, dip in beaten egg, and roll in fine bread crumbs. Fry a golden brown in deep fat, and drain on blotting paper or brown paper a few moments before serving. Garnish with parsley

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

A good gift for a linen shower would be lavender pads for the linen chest or closet. Two pieces of linen of a deep cream color, three by five inches, with one side embroidered, would make a good-looking pad. A border design in lavender and green, done in cross stitching, would be sufficient decoration. A lavender flower in satin-stitch embroidery or in cross-stitch placed in the center of the pad would also be attractive. After the embroidery is finished the two pieces of linen are sewed together on three sides, turned and filled with lavender. The opening is overhanded together, and the pad is ready to place among the linens.

When traveling it is a great convenience to have a bag for holding rubber shoes when not in use. One of these may be made with a lining of rubber cloth, made separately, so that the outer cover of tan linen can be removed for washing. The outer cover is made like an envelope and a trifle larger than the inside rubber cloth envelope. The linen can be scalloped around the flap and embroidered or cross-stitched by way of ornament, being fastened over with metal clasps at either end. The rubber cloth envelope inside can be fastened over with one clasp in the center only, so that the clasps on the inner and outer envelopes will not be one on top of the other to make them difficult to close

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

Whip cream in a pitcher instead of a bowl if you want to do it in about half the time and without spattering

When about to clean paint in a kitchen or other rooms where there is a stove, heat a boiler of water and allow it to boil without a cover for a long time

To keep the leaves of India rubber plants firm and glossy, sponge them once a week with tepid milk and water, first washing them—if dusty—with slightly soapy water

Soap and powdered chalk mixed and rubbed on mildew spots will remove them. To expedite matters let the spotted article lie in the sun for a few hours, dampening it again as it dries

A LESSON IN BREATHING.

No piece of advice that the physician can give will bear more frequent repetition than the pithy sentence, "Breathe deeply." It is a perfectly simple rule of health, yet it is constantly broken There is no reason why our lungs should not have all the fresh air they need for their work; the supply is unlimited. But in our folly we refuse to give them their fair share of it, because we are too lazy to remember to breathe deeply We go on from day to day drawing little, inadequate puffs of air, living from hand to mouth, as it were; and then we wonder why we feel tired and nervous, why our skin is sallow and our eyes dull, why we catch cold easily and digest our food badly When things have come to this pass, there is nothing for it except to put ourselves to school and learn patiently to do what we are meant to do unconsciously

There are two ways to learn to breathe. If our powers of self-discipline are poor, as is the case with most insufficient breathers, it is a good plan to join a gymnasium or call [illegible] class, and learn to use the lungs as a baby learns to use its feet and hands But remember that lessons in breathing will do no good if the scholar thinks he is absolved from his task except when he is in the [illegible] A simpler method, for those who have not time or opportunity for the gymnasium, is to turn life's daily routine into a continuous discipline in breathing If the poor breather takes the trouble to watch himself carefully, he will find that when he is engaged upon any work that calls for close attention he does not even breathe as deeply as usual; he almost invariably holds his breath. Thus the blood current is vitiated when it ought to be cleansed; and the worker exhausts himself not so much by his labors as by his neglect. Learn to make a breathing lesson of dressing in the morning, of going up and down stairs, of your duties in household, office, or shop, of your walks, your games, and your rest. Draw in deep drafts of air every time you take a breath, and every little while stop everything else and fill your lungs a few times with breaths that test their capacity. You will be surprised to see the improvement that it will make in your general condition.

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"Yes," replied the knowing young woman; "but from here the hand looks to me like four cards that the heart won't better."

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500-514 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Black Horse Ben

Or, Liberty's Lone Scout

By Capt. Jack Judson

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CHAPTER IV.

NOBODY in the Peedee district knew better than Black Horse Ben himself that he was a marked person. His work for the cause of liberty had set all the Tories against him, and he had been posted as an outlaw everywhere.

Thus far he had escaped the numerous traps set for him, but his friends feared that sooner or later he would fall into one of them. Should he be so unfortunate his doom was certain.

The night after he had landed his wounded prisoner in General Greene's camp he vaulted into the saddle and rode away.

"I want to see if old Zeke has picked up any news," he said to himself, as he left the American camp behind him. "The old fellow is shrewd and is always on the alert, and if anything important is floating in the air he is pretty sure to catch it."

It was a ride of ten miles and more thru the moonlight before the boy drew rein and sprang to the ground.

A small house stood before him, and upon entering it he was greeted by a man of nearly 70, with a pair of keen gray eyes and a sharp chin.

"Welcome, boy!" exclaimed old Zeke. "I've just been thinking o' ye and wondering if the rascally Tories had caught you."

"Not yet, Zeke," answered Ben, with a little laugh.

"But you've been posted on nearly every tree in the deestrict from what I learn."

"Paper's cheap," was the response. "But what news have you for me?"

"Just a little, Ben. There's to be a meeting this very night of the King's Friends."

"That is news, indeed. Where do the rascals meet?"

"I fancy you might find some of them now at Hawes' shop at the crossroads."

"Not two miles away!" exclaimed Ben. "I'll look in upon the conclave."

"But be careful," admonished Zeke Potter. "You're riding around with your head in the noose all the time, mind you."

As the boy moved toward the door the occupant of the old house ran after him and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Last night a party o' Tarleton's men rode past the house.' I was hiding in the garret, and I got a good look at them. They stopped right in front of the house, and for a moment I thought they were going to search it. But they left me unmolested; tho, had they searched the trap, I mightn't be here now telling you."

Hawes' shop was a conspicuous place in the vicinity, and was blacksmith shop and inn combined. It had long been a rendezvous for the Tories of the neighborhood, and they were wont to congregate there at various times and plot against freedom. Ben knew all the approaches to the place, and when he left old Zeke's house he veered to the right, and, taking a byroad, was soon near the object of his search.

Old Zeke was right. Seven horses hitched near the house furnished proof enough of the secret meeting, and the boy was soon among them.

He went to work and turned all the saddles, besides knotting the reins as much as possible, and when he had finished his work he moved toward the house. The curtains had been lowered out of precaution, and the boy stepped lightly across the porch and applied an ear to the handiest window. Voices soon came to his ears.

"We'll be the laughing stock of the King's army if we don't soon rid the district of that venomous boy!" exclaimed a loud voice.

"He's done us more harm than Marion with his night riders," said another.

"And in spite of all our posting, he is still at large and no doubt laughs in his sleeve at our failure to bag him."

"What is his last trick?" some one asked.

"Why, he captured one of the dragoons at Mrs. Hagan's and took him into the Rebel camp."

"The dragoon must have been asleep."

"No, he wasn't. He was wide awake, but the boy shot thru the window and winged him like a partridge."

"The young demon! Look here, men. We've got to get that boy."

"Or be forever disgraced in the eyes of the King's officers. I look for him to try to take Colonel Tarleton himself one of these days."

"I don't put anything past him," was the reply.

All this caused a smile to ripple over Ben's face.

"Gentlemen," said a solemn voice, at this juncture, "we have met here to sign the new constitution of our clan. I have it here on the table. You will sign it one by one, and it will then be placed in safe-keeping."

By this time the young Rebel had discovered a little opening which enabled him to take a survey of the room beyond. He saw seven well-known Tories of the district around a table, and the room was lighted by several lights which revealed every part of it.

The Tories made ready to append their names to the new constitution, and Ben noted their eagerness. One by one they signed the writing on the table, and the last name was soon written.

"I'd like to get hold of that paper," thought Ben, as his eyes seemed to enlarge. "Greene and Marion would give a good deal to have it in their possession, and the Tories would suffer accordingly."

Drawing a pair of pistols which he always carried on his night rides, Black Horse Ben glided to a door not far from the window. He was confident that the door was not locked, for it was evident that the Tories thought themselves safe without making safety sure with bolts and bars.

He paused at the door and listened a minute longer, then, suddenly pressing the latch, he threw the portal wide and stood on the threshold, covering the seven Tories with a cocked weapon. If some one had come back from the Unknown Land, the seven could not have been more astounded.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Ben, in clear tones. "I hope I'm not interrupting your gayety."

The seven were too astonished to speak.

"I would like to have that roll of paper on the table," continued the young friend of liberty. "I don't care to harm one of you, but it's the paper I'll take."

The pompous chairman of the meeting grew white in the face and snatched the document from the table.

"Your audacity is without bounds!" said he, in hoarse tones. "You can't have the paper."

"Can't, eh?" laughed Black Horse Ben. "If it is not handed to me inside of three seconds there will be more than one Tory mustered out of King George's service."

"You're a robber," growled one of the seven.

"Call me what you please," was the answer. "But don't spar for time. I'm in a hurry tonight, so toss the roll to me, and I'll thank you for your kindness."

The discomfited Tories looked blankly at one another, but not one stirred.

"Will you refuse?" asked Ben, and his eyes seemed to glitter behind the pistols. "I can't wait any longer. The paper, or dead men at the table."

The large man who held the precious document looked once at his companions, then with an oath he threw the prized thing toward the door and it lighted at the boy's feet.

"Thank you very much," smiled the young victor. "Good night, one and all."

With this Ben made a low bow and fell back. A bound carried him across the porch.

"To horse!" he heard shouted behind him in a bedlam of tones. "We can ride the young robber down," and out of the house poured a lot of angry men, all intent upon catching the boy whose trick had worked to perfection.

Ben had already reached his horse, and as he vaulted into the saddle he heard the Tories raging over the trick he had turned with their own steeds.

"I guess all's fair in war," chuckled Black Horse Ben, as he sped away whilst the enemy were trying to undo his trick. "Now we will see who belong to the King's Friends. It will be real news for Greene and Marion. I won't ride down to old Zeke's to inspect the paper, for I know a safer place."

He knew he had outdistanced the Tories, for he did not hear the sound of hoofs behind him, and in course of half an hour he turned into a deep gully thru which at one time a creek had flowed.

Halfway down the gully was a narrow opening into the bank, and Ben rode fearlessly into it, halting in the dark some distance from the entrance. His tinder box soon furnished him with a light and he had taken the captured document from his coat when he was startled by a voice. He turned like one shot, and the light revealed a tall man leaning against the wall with a cocked pistol in his hand.

Black Horse Ben stared and blanched, for there was danger in the deep-set eyes behind the weapon.

CHAPTER V.

THE young patriot knew the man on sight. He was Selwyn Gedds, a Tory who had been hunted for weeks by the Americans, and Black Horse Ben saw at once that he had unwittingly invaded the refugee's hiding-place.

For some minutes man and boy stared at each other without speech. Gedds held the cocked pistol at arms' length, covering the youth, while his eyes snapped with ire.

"So you've found me?" cried Gedds, at last. "I know you for the boy prowler of the district, and now I have a chance to put an end to your career."

"And pray what good would that do you?" asked Ben.

"It would do the King's cause a whole lot of good," was the reply. "Do you think I'm going to let you take me into the Rebel camp and get a noose from some of the Swamp Fox's men?"

"No such thing has entered my mind," answered the youth. "In the first place, I came here for another purpose, for the secret of your hideout was unknown to me."

"Say you so, boy?"

"It is true, sir."

"But I like the looks of that horse," cried the refugee. "I know he has a name by now because of the person he carries, and he would create a sensation in Tarleton's camp."

Covered as he was by the leveled pistol, Ben dared not make a move to draw his own. He was in the man's power.

"I'm going to take a ride," continued Gedds, sharply. "This old hideout had grown stale on my hands, and now I have a chance to do the King some real service."

Gedds advanced, still holding his weapon on a level with the boy's head, and a swift blow which Ben could not anticipate stretched him unconscious on the ground. When he came to his senses he discovered that his black horse was carrying double, that Gedds, the Tory, was in the saddle, whilst he, Ben, had been lashed behind in the most approved fashion.

The terrible truth flashed thru his mind in the hundredth part of a second. Selwyn Gedds was taking him to

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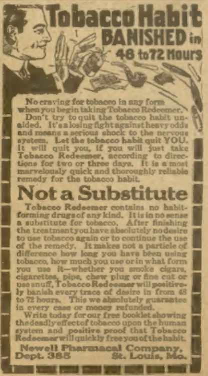

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some British camp, or perhaps to the rendezvous of a lot of murdering Tories. The thought nearly paralyzed his brain.

There was virtually no escape. The thongs cut almost to the bone, and a handkerchief had been tied around his mouth, thus shutting off any cry for help. It was a hard ride of more than two hours.

Ben thought of the papers which he had taken from the Tories at Hawes' shop, and knew that they were enough to condemn him. ~~Yet he~~ could not get at them, and must therefore carry them with him, and thus put the finishing touches to the evidence against him.

All at once the boy patriot heard the challenge of a sentry which brought Gedds to a full stop, and the following moment they were within the lines of some encampment. A few moments afterward Gedds reined in the black horse before a tent of respectable proportions, in front of which stalked a guard in British uniform.

Gedds leaped to the ground.

"Where is his excellency, Colonel Tarleton?" asked the Tory of the sentry.

"Inside, sir, but he must not be disturbed."

"Not when I've brought him the most important prisoner in the Colony?"

"What, that boy?" laughed the guard.

"Yes. This is Black Horse Ben, worth as much to Colonel Tarleton as Marion or Greene."

At this the curtains of the tent were drawn aside, and a handsome officer made his appearance.

"What's all this?" cried Tarleton, leaning forward to take in the whole situation. "What were you saying about an important prisoner?"

"There he is!" replied Gedds, pointing to his capture. "Take a good look at him, your excellency. I have brought you the young scourge known as Black Horse Ben."

Tarleton came forward in a bound. His gaze became riveted upon Ben's face, and the youth returned the look with interest.

"Are you really Black Horse Ben?" the haughty Briton asked.

"They call me so," was the calm reply.

"And you captured him—alone and unaided?" Tarleton said, turning to Gedds.

"He walked into a trap, else I might not have cornered him," was the response.

"And pray who are you, sir?"

"Selwyn Gedds."

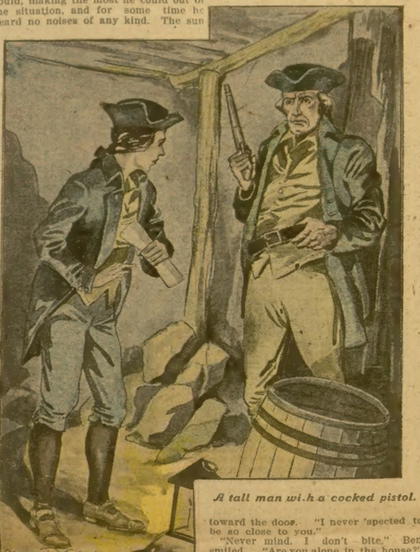
Tarleton frowned, for the Tory was not in very good odor with the British.

In a short time Ben found himself lifted from the horse by a giant dragoon, and he cast a lingering look at Comet, who had dropped his head as if out of sympathy with his young master.

"We'll take care of the horse," smiled Tarleton, noticing the look. "I dare say he is capable of helping the King's cause in many ways."

When Black Horse Ben came fully to his senses, he was in a small room of a house which stood on a gentle knoll not far from Tarleton's headquarters. He did not try the door, for he knew it was locked, and he went over to a couch and threw himself dejectedly upon it. He was in the enemy's hands at last! After all his escapades he had fallen into the net which had been spread so long to catch him, and he felt that no mercy awaited him at the hands of the foe.

The first streaks of day stealing into the chamber revealed its dimensions, and he saw that it was almost bare of furniture. The floor was carpetless, there was but one chair, and that was a poor affair, and Ben felt that his prison was dark and drear enough. He pulled himself together as best he could, making the most he could out of the situation, and for some time he heard no noises of any kind. The sun came up and the day lengthened. Had they forgotten him?



A tall man wi.h a cocked pistol.

When he thought of the captured papers he took them from his bosom and managed to press them into a crack in the wall, after which he concealed the opening as well as he could.

All at once he heard a key grind in an iron lock, and as the door opened he beheld the inky face of a slave woman. She carried a platter of food in her hands.

"Dis am fo' you, honey!" she said, with a broad smile. "De Kunnel tole me to cook it fo' you, an' it am good an' clean."

The food was placed on the chair, and the black woman stood off with arms akimbo looking Ben over from head to foot.

"Be you de Kunnel's prisoner?" she suddenly asked, with wonder in her eyes.

"I am nothing else," answered Ben.

"How did dey manage ter cotch you?"

"There's no need of telling the story, as it's not a very pleasant thing to think about," Ben said, with some feeling. "I just rode into the wrong nest; that's all there is to it."

"You can't be British, then?" observed the woman.

"They call me Rebel."

The whites of the two big eyes came into sudden prominence.

"Fo' de land's sake!" ejaculated the woman. "De Kunnel don't like Rebels. But eat your meal, honey. There mayn't be many mo' fo' you."

These were not very happy words for Ben to think over, but as he was hungry he began to discuss the eatables in silence.

When he had finished he turned to the black woman and laid his hand on her arm.

"Are you for the King, auntie?" he asked, looking her in the face.

"I jes' don't kno' who I'se fo'," was the somewhat halting reply.

"You're a slave?"

"Yas. I belong to Massa Greer, who ain't at home jes' now."

"He is for King George?"

"Yas, honey."

"Well, auntie," Ben went on impressively, "they're going to hang me because I love liberty. I am against the cause in which Colonel Tarleton fights. They call me Black Horse Ben——"

The woman threw up her hands in astonishment.

"Now, you ain't dat boy they talk so much about?" she exclaimed, backing toward the door. "I never 'spected to be so close to you."

"Never mind. I don't bite," Ben smiled. "Are you alone in the house?"

"Yas, till Massa Greer comes back. I cook fo' de Kunnel; but don't ask me to help you, kase I can't."

Ben's heart sank to immeasurable depths in his bosom. He felt faint for a moment.

"Well," said he thru clinched teeth, "I don't feel the rope yet, and Colonel Tarleton may miss the triumph he meditates," and without more words he saw the black woman disappear.

CHAPTER VI.

COLONEL BANNISTER TARLETON of the King's Dragoons was too busy during the day which followed Black Horse Ben's arrival in the British camp to think much about his prisoner. He considered the boy safe in the house to which he had been consigned, for he had placed a guard on the premises, and, moreover, he depended on Lucia, the slave woman, to watch over the prize.

Therefore, it was not till the middle of the afternoon that the Colonel appeared at the house for his dinner. He was waited on by the woman.

"How is our bird getting along in his cage?" asked the famous officer.

"Fine as silk, Massa Kunnel," was the reply. "Dat was a good cotch."

"To be sure it was," returned Tarleton. "We have been trying for months to get that young Rebel in our hands, but he and his black horse have cunningly outwitted us."

"But you got 'im now!"

"Yes, and he's not going to give us the slip," cried Tarleton, in exultant tones. "I will take care of him tomorrow. Just now I am too busy to take up the matter."

"An' what is Massa Kunnel going to do with de young Rebel?"

The man's face hardened.

"We'll treat him as he deserves," he said, shutting his lips hard behind the last word. "He has cheated us out of more than one victory already, and I suppose we will have to curtail his exploits. No, I don't care about looking in upon him just now. I know he is safe where he is."

Meantime Selwyn Gedds had been paid the reward offered for Ben's apprehension and had disappeared.

Evening was falling over the British camp when six men entered it and made for Tarleton's headquarters. The Britisher recognized all of them as the most rampant Tories in the district, and as they were men of some wealth he became quite deferential.

"What can I do for you, my friends?" he asked.

Gilford Gross, whom we have already met, was the spokesman for the band, and he answered with some emphasis.

"We have been faced and robbed by the young rascal called Black Horse Ben, your excellency!" said he.

A little smile flitted over Tarleton's face.

"What, let a boy plunder you?" he exclaimed.

"We just couldn't help it under the circumstances. Our loyal order was having a meeting at Hawes' shop last night. There were seven present. We met to sign the new constitution and did so. All at once the door was thrown open, and there stood the boy with two pistols in his hands. The weapons were leveled at our heads, and he demanded the paper of us. What could we do under the circumstances? It was the paper or death to at least two of our party."

"And you gave it up?"

"We had to."

"The boy got away then, I suppose?"

"He had the black horse with him, and you know he has the speed of the wind."

"But you had horses, had you not?"

"We had, your excellency, but the young scamp before facing us had turned the saddles and knotted the reins, so that by the time we overcame his trick he was on the go. We followed as fast as we could, but failed to overtake him."

Tarleton was silent for a few moments.

"I presume you have come to me asking me to put forward new efforts to catch the boy?" said he.

"Such is our mission."

"Well, my friends, the bird has been netted."

The Tories nearly collapsed for joy.

"What, is Black Horse Ben your prisoner?" they exclaimed in unison.

"I am glad to inform you that he is."

"And is in your camp?"

"He is my prisoner," replied Tarleton. "I have him safe behind bolts and bars and well watched besides. I did not search him, but I expect he has the stolen constitution with him, therefore it can be recovered."

"This is good news!" cried the Tories. "We hardly hoped to hear it."

"Now," continued Tarleton, "you shall see the boy tonight. I invite you to dine with me at the Greer house, where Black Horse Ben is, and after the repast you shall take a look at him. For full proof that we have him you will find his horse in charge of Dragoon DeKay."

"I don't like that man," growled Gross. "He mistreated me in my own house not long ago."

"Without reason?"

"Why, yes. I wanted my ward to drink a toast to the King, but she was stubborn, and when I attempted to bring her round this man DeKay interfered."

"Isn't the girl true?"

"She's Rebel at heart," answered

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Gross. "She would sooner drink to Marion than to King George and——"

"Well, we've got to let the young lassies have their way, tho some of them ought to be chastised for their sentiments," and again Tarleton laughed. "Call at my tent at seven, and we will sup at the Greer house, where Aunt Lucia will provide a fine repast."

Delighted with their mission, the Tories withdrew and roamed about the camp at will.

Tarleton was planning a night descent upon Marion, who had taken up his position not far away, and withdrew into his quarters.

"There's the black horse now!" suddenly cried Gross. "And, as I live! he is being groomed by that man DeKay."

"Good evening, Master Gross," exclaimed the young dragoon, when the Tories came up. "I think we have met before."

The answer was a snarl.

"I hope you haven't disciplined Mistress Vera," continued DeKay.

"That is none of your business," grunted the Tory. "I have reported you to Colonel Tarleton, and I have no doubt he will discipline you."

A broad smile wandered over the young trooper's face.

"Do you know what I'd do with such men as you if I had the power?" he said, looking into Gross' eyes. "You are too cowardly to come out openly and wear the King's toggery, and for your cowardice I'd hang you all higher than Haman to the Carolina oaks."

The Tory band turned white.

"Well," whispered one of the six, "I'm glad he hasn't the authority."

"We are going to ask Colonel Tarleton to turn that horse over to us," remarked one of the six.

"And asking will be all you'll get for your pains," was the sharp reply. "I'm going to ride the black horse myself, and the first Tory who lays hands on him with the intent to take him from me will be cut down as tho he was a full-blooded Rebel."

When 7 o'clock came the Tories appeared on the lawn in front of Ben's prison and began to wait for Colonel Tarleton to make his appearance. He did not keep them waiting long, for he was noted for his promptness, and he led the way into the large dining-room, where a sumptuous table had been already spread by Lucia's deft hands.

The meal consisted of many good things taken from American homes, and the dinner was discussed amid a good deal of merriment. In the eyes of each Tory was to be seen an eagerness that would not down. All were waiting for a sight of Black Horse Ben.

When the wine had been served, Tarleton turned to the black cook.

"You still have my bird, eh, Lucia?" said he.

"Oh, yes, Massa Kunnel. I haven't heard much o' him, but he's still in de cage," was the response.

"And the guards have been on constant duty?"

"Dey haven't left their places for a minute."

"That's good. Now, gentlemen, I will let you have a look at the young Rebel lion of the Peedee."

"That's what we've been waiting for, your excellency. We can't thank you enough for holding him."

"That was a duty I owed to my King. Come. Let us take a look at him."

Colonel Tarleton picked up a candle and led the way to the room in which our young hero had been installed, the Tories following at his heels. With a key which Lucia had handed him the British officer unlocked the door and pushed it open. The six eager rascals crowded forward.

"Here he is," said Tarleton, holding the light above his head. "I always hold a bird when I catch it, and—thunder and furies! what has happened?"

The candle nearly dropped from Tarleton's hands; he turned white. The room was empty!

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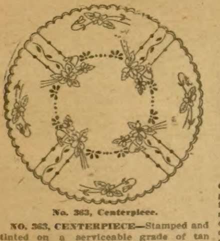

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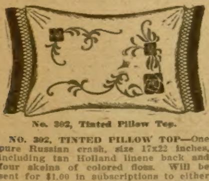

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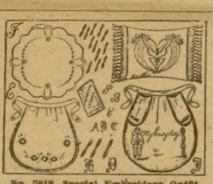

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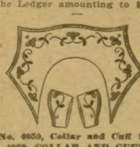

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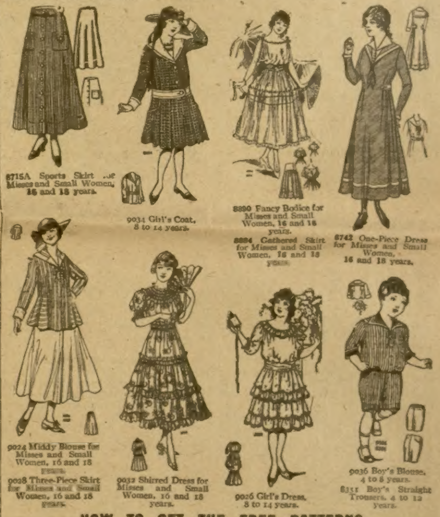

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THE FAIRY CORNER

LOVING MOTHER SO.

We alluz love our muvver so
When she is bakin', and theys dough
Like sugar cakes is made of, an'
They's alluz some left in the pan,
An' now an' then she lets us lick
When it's not 'nuff to make us sick.

And we most alluz love her, too,
When she is goin' out, an' you
Ist wonder what she's goin' to buy,
An' when the fings come in you try
To guess an' guess what there is in
The packages 'at's fat an' thin.

An' when it's almost Christmas, gee!
We love her more 'an you could see,
An' mind her ever' time she calls,
An' stop our rompin' thru the halls,
An' kickin' carpets up that way
When we forget, so wild with play.

And 'en when she is tired and aches
Wif buying' fings an' bakin cakes,
We smooth her hair and pat her cheeks,
An' kiss her ever' time she speaks,
An' kneel right down and say our prayers,
An' give good night an' go upstairs.

◆

THE CROW.

Once upon a time there were three princesses who were all three fair and beautiful; but the youngest, altho she was not fairer than the other two, was the most lovable of them all.

About half a mile from the palace in which they lived there stood a castle, which was uninhabited and almost a ruin, but the garden that surrounded it was a mass of blooming flowers, and in this garden the youngest princess used often to walk.

One day when she was pacing to and fro under the lime trees a black crow hopped out of a rose bush in front of her. The poor bird was all torn and bleeding, and the kind little princess was quite unhappy about it. When the crow saw this it turned to her and said:

"I am not really a black crow, but an enchanted prince, who has been doomed to pass his youth in misery. If you only liked, princess, you could save me. But you would have to say good-by to all your people and come and be my constant companion in this ruined castle. There is one habitable room in it in which there is a golden bed; there you will have to live all by yourself, and don't forget that whatever you may see or hear in the night you must not scream out, for if you give as much as a single cry my sufferings will be doubled."

The good-natured princess at once left her home and her family and hurried to the ruined castle and took possession of the room with the golden bed.

When night approached she lay down, but tho she shut her eyes tight sleep would not come. At midnight she heard to her great horror some one coming along the passage, and in a minute her door was flung wide open and a troop of strange beings entered the room. They at once proceeded to light a fire in the huge fireplace; then they placed a great cauldron of boiling water on it. When they had done this they approached the bed on which the trembling girl lay, and, screaming and yelling all the time, they dragged her toward the cauldron. She nearly died with fright, but she uttered not a sound. Then of a sudden the cock crowed, and all the evil spirits vanished.

At the same moment the crow appeared and hopped joyfully around the room. It thanked the princess heartily for her goodness and said that its sufferings had already been greatly lessened.

Now one of the princess' elder sisters, who was inquisitive, had found out about everything, and went to pay her youngest sister a visit in the ruined castle. She implored her so urgently to let her pass the night with her in the golden bed that at last the good-natured little princess consented. But at midnight, when the odd folk appeared, the elder sister screamed with terror, and from this time on the youngest princess insisted on keeping watch alone.

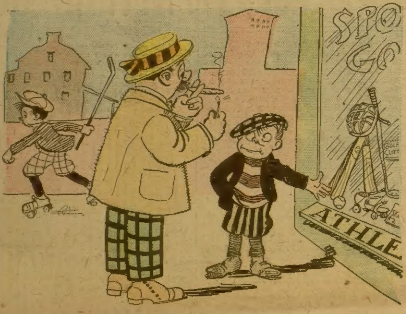
So she lived in solitude all the daytime and at night she would have been frightened had she not been so brave, but every day the crow came and thanked her for her endurance, and assured her that his sufferings were far less than they had been.

And so two years passed away, when one day the crow came to the princess and said: "In another year I shall be freed from the spell I am under at present, because then the seven years will be over. But before I can resume my natural form and take possession of the belongings of my forefathers you must go out into the world and take service as a maidservant."

The young princess consented at once, and for a whole year she served as a maid, but in spite of her youth and beauty she was badly treated and suffered many things. One evening when she was spinning flax and had worked her little white hands weary, she heard a rustling beside her and a cry of joy. Then she saw a handsome youth standing beside her, who knelt down at her feet and kissed the little weary white hands.

"I am the prince," he said, "whom you in your goodness, when I was wandering about in the shape of a black crow, freed from the most awful torments. Come now to my castle with me and let us live there happily together."

So they went to the castle where they had both endured so much. But when they reached it, it was difficult to believe that it was the same, for it had all been rebuilt. And there they lived together for a hundred years.



Son (to father)—"Say, pa, the soles of my shoes are worn out, but I can wear the shoes longer if you'll buy me a pair of roller skates, so they'll cover the soles."

◆

A VICTORY.

Trouble was brewing. You could tell it without half trying. It was all because Mr. Jack Rabbit, instead of following the time-honored custom of his tribe and family and selecting a wife from near home, had gone far afield and had persuaded Miss Cordelia Cottontail to become his bride. Well, there really was trouble in the air.

Mr. Jack Rabbit was a celebrated athlete. He could beat any of the forest folk on a short or a long dash or a broad jump. Ever since Jack had been knee-high to a potato bug his family had expected that when he grew up he would marry his cousin, Miss Jacqueminot Rabbit, who lived next hole and who was as spry a little lady as ever was seen. She was held to be beautiful indeed because her ears were so long. But Jack took to roving about the country, and on one of his jaunts he happened to meet Miss Cordelia Cottontail. When Mr. Jack asked her she said "yes," at once; so they hopped and skipped and jumped and ran back to Arkansas together. That made all the rumpus, and trouble began to brew.

Jack Rabbit had thirteen brothers and the father and mother had brought them up always to mind promptly and to be careful how they kept to the family traditions. Hence it was a great shock to have Jack bring Miss Cordelia Cottontail into the family, when the whole fifteen (including the mother and father) had expected to have Jacqueminot as a sister-in-law. So, calling the family together, Father Jack Rabbit mounted a stump and lectured the boys for two hours on the sinfulness of doing what was not expected of you.

Just when he was getting to his "lastly" a little noise was heard behind him and up on top of the stump jumped Miss Cordelia Cottontail. Before Father Jack Rabbit knew what had happened her two little front paws came up on his shoulder and she kissed him right on his wiggly nose.

Father Jack Rabbit gave a terrible gasp. Mother Jack Rabbit gave a terrible gasp. The thirteen brothers gave terrible gasps. But Miss Cordelia Cottontail did not mind it in the least. She just giggled and kissed her paw to her new brothers; and before any one of them could even catch enough breath to breathe she said:

"It is lovely of you, Father Jack Rabbit; and of you, Mother Jack, and of you, dear brothers, to plan this beautiful surprise and welcome me in such a cordial manner. I did not expect a party at all, I assure you, and I am more delighted than words can tell. Dear Jack has told me how lovely you all are and how glad you would be to see me, but I did not expect all this style. It is more than generous of you. And now, to entertain you before the refreshments, which I know generous Father Jack Rabbit is going to serve, I will dance you the latest dance from New York State, called the hopskipandjump. Please give me a little more room, father!"

So Father Jack Rabbit had to get down off the stump; and because he had been called so generous he felt he must serve refreshments or else lose his good reputation. So he quietly gave Mother Jack Rabbit some money to hustle some of the boys off to the corner store to get some carrot ice cream and cabbage cake. Not one of the Jack Rabbit family dared to be disagreeable, because of the reputation that Cordelia Cottontail had given them all. And then she really was a nice fat little round lady rabbit, anyway!

So that is how Miss Cordelia Cottontail won out. She knew that it is always best to assume that people are agreeable.

◆

The Lost Kitten.

Mrs. Flint came for a visit to her sister's home and her little niece, Charlotte, was delighted to see her.

"What became of the black kitten that you had when I was here before, dear?" asked Mrs. Flint.

"Why, don't you know?" asked Charlotte, much surprised.

"I haven't heard a word," replied the aunt. "Was he poisoned?"

"No, ma'am," said Charlotte.

"Drowned?"

"Oh, no."

"Stolen?"

"No, indeed."

"Hurt in any way?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well," said Mrs. Flint, "I can't guess, dear. What has become of him?"

"He growed into a cat," said Charlotte.

◆

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